00022310

BOMBAY BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 28 March, 2016

THE

LIFE AND LETTERS

OF

BARTHOLD GEORGE NIEBUHR.

22310
a1 XXII.c.

WITH

ESSAYS ON HIS CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE

BY THE CHEVALIER BUNSEN,

AND PROFESSORS BRANDIS AND LOEBELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1852.

22310

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS

00022310

PREFACE.

No justification could be needed for offering to the English public a Life of Niebuhr, but it seems necessary to explain how far the present work can claim to be considered as such.

It is founded upon one entitled "Lebensnachrichten über Barthold Georg Niebuhr," which is chiefly composed of extracts from Niebuhr's letters; though a short narrative, intended to explain these, and fill up the chasms they leave in his history, is prefixed to each of the periods into which it is divided. The principal editor of the "Lebensnachrichten" was Madame Hensler, Niebuhr's sister-in-law, to whom most of the letters are addressed, and who thus states the views with which she performed her task:

. . . . "The reader will not need to be reminded that the Extracts from the Letters form the most important part of the work.

"As I have already observed, these are not to be judged from the point of view which would be taken by an editor of Niebuhr's learned or general correspondence: such a one would have made a very different and a much more copious selection, and would probably, too, have followed critical rules which were beside the aim of the present work. This aim is simply biographical; to communicate whatever can throw light upon his natural capacities and dispositions,—his mental development,—his studies,—his mode of thought,—his views of life, the State, art, and literature,—his relations as a citizen, a friend, and a member of the domestic circle,—his large and profound sympathies,—his keen sense of the noble and beautiful,—his zeal for justice and truth; and, not less, his faults and weaknesses, for these, too, neither ought nor need to be glossed over. Niebuhr was not so poor in great and amiable qualities, as to require an artificial light, in order to retain the esteem of those whose esteem he would have valued; and while his letters contain many beautiful traits which a regard to others forbids us to publish, they contain nothing which could have brought our friendship for him and our love of truth into collision.

"Whether some of the letters retained might not have

been omitted, and others inserted with advantage, is a point on which judgments will naturally differ. . . . .

"The greatest possible care has been taken to avoid anything like indiscretion towards the living, or a profanation of feelings, which Niebuhr would have regarded as belonging to the inner sanctuary of the heart. Perhaps, in some cases, this scruple has been carried too far (for instance in omitting expressions of affection in the letters to his betrothed), and possibly too, some things may unawares have been retained, in which one better acquainted with the circumstances may perceive allusions that escaped the selector."

I believe none who have paid attention to the subject, will deny, that the editor has, in the main, accomplished her purpose, and presented a picture of Niebuhr as a man, and in his private relations, which, in point of completeness and fairness, is excelled by few biographies; but it is equally certain that the account of his public career is very incomplete, and by no means one that enables the reader to perceive the relation in which Niebuhr stood to his times. The biographical notices in the present work are shorter than Madame Hensler's narrative, on which they are based, but they also comprise a considerable amount of additional information,

derived partly from other publications, partly from conversation with intimate friends of Niebuhr.* Several letters too have been added, throwing light on his public life. Thus, it is believed, that something has been done towards supplying the deficiency alluded to, though far less than still remains to be done. It was hoped that much more might have been effected, but Niebuhr's memorials and despatches, as well as some valuable collections of his letters (especially those to Valckenaer and many of those to de Serre), still remain inaccessible to his friends, and with such an imperfect knowledge of the subject, the translator felt that it was out of the question to attempt to frame an account that should present a view of his life as a whole.

Of the letters given in the "Lebensnachrichten," about half have been translated. In the selection of these the aim has been, while omitting those which could be interesting only in Germany, and avoiding repetition where it was possible, to maintain the relative proportions which their various topics assume in the original, and thus to reproduce with faithfulness, on a

* Such information as helped to explain or illustrate the letters has been added in notes, in cases where it would have broken the thread of the narrative if inserted in the Introductory Notices.

smaller scale, the portrait there exhibited. Those who know the "Lebensnachrichten" will probably regret that none of Niebuhr's letters on learned subjects have been inserted; but it seemed desirable to confine this selection to those of general interest, and should the present work meet with a favourable reception, it is intended to publish, in a third volume, the letters referred to, together with the most valuable portions of his smaller writings.

In reading Niebuhr's letters, it must be remembered, first, that they were hasty compositions addressed to his most intimate friends, and hence in giving them to the world, Madame Hensler has deemed it advisable frequently to omit single sentences or expressions, which explains the somewhat abrupt and obscure style of many passages; and secondly, with regard to his political sentiments, that it was necessary, in Germany, to observe great caution in the publication of facts or opinions on such subjects; and therefore these letters give no *complete* view of what he thought and felt, even on the passing events of the day. Nevertheless it may be hoped that he will not be misunderstood in England, and that those who occupy themselves with political questions will lay his words to heart.

In conclusion, the translator begs to express the warmest acknowledgments to those friends of Niebuhr who have aided in the progress of this work, especially to His Excellency Chevalier Bunsen, without whose encouragement and assistance it would never have been undertaken, to Professor Loebell, for his "Letter on Niebuhr's Character as an Historian," and to Professors Brandis and Welcker, to the former of whom it has been indebted for most of the original information which it contains.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

Page

BIRTH.—SKETCH OF HIS PARENTS AND NATIVE PLACE.—ILL-HEALTH. — CHILDISH AMUSEMENTS AND STUDIES. — THE BOJES. — INTEREST IN POLITICS.—ACQUAINTANCE WITH VOSS.—EDUCATION.—VISIT TO HAMBURGH.—STUDIES.—LIST OF THE LANGUAGES HE KNEW 1

CHAPTER II.

COLLEGE LIFE.

THE UNIVERSITY OF KIEL. — FRIENDSHIPS FORMED THERE. — DR. HENSLER.—MADAME HENSLER.—LOVE OF THE CLASSICS . 29

LETTERS.

1. To his Parents.—His society at Kiel.—Hensler 33
2. Grief at Fichte's defence of revolution 35
3. The study of philosophy.—Geographical questions.—Hypothesis respecting the earliest colonisation of Greece, &c.—The origin of races 36
4. Books in hand.—Separation from a friend who denied Free-will 40
5. Plans of study 41
6. The same 41
7. Mode of life.—Philosophy.—Thibaut 42
8. Introduction to Miss Behrens 43
9. A learned lady 44

Page

10. Good resolutions 46
11. His future vocation.—Education 47
12. Justification of his refusal to go into society 48
13. Algernon Sidney.—Dictating History of the Revolution . . 49
14. The same 50

EUTIN AND THE SOCIETY THERE.—THE STOLBERGS.—THE REVENTLOWS.—JACOBI.—MOLTKE 51

LETTERS.

15. To MOLTKE.—Corruption of the German language by the Thirty Years War.—Voss.—Klopstock 55
16. Relative importance of grammatical studies.—Wolf.—Jacobi.—Becomes Private Secretary to Count Schimmelman.—Acquaintance with Amelia Behrens 57

CHAPTER III.

RESIDENCE IN COPENHAGEN.

COUNT SCHIMMELMAN.—LIFE AT HIS HOUSE.—BECOMES SECRETARY AT THE ROYAL LIBRARY.—ENGAGEMENT TO AMELIA BEHRENS.—PLANS FOR GOING TO PARIS 61

LETTERS.

17. To MADAME HENSLER.—Attachment to Miss Behrens. . . . 66
18. To MOLTKE.—Announcing his engagement 68
19. Position and prospects at Schimmelman's.—Grouvelle . . 72
20. On Moltke's marriage 74
21. Low moral tone of German poets.—Decline of literature . . 76
22. To HIS PARENTS.—Progress in the study of Persian.—Plan of going to Constantinople 77
23. To MADAME HENSLER.—Schimmelman's plan for a Government Journal 81
24. Requisites for a Professor of Philology 82
25. Plans of future life.—Attachment to Amelia Behrens . . 83
26. Vindicating himself from the charge of idealising his friends 84
27. Dangers of the scholar's life.—Mental training of the ancients. 85
28. Revolution of the 18th Fructidor 89
29. To AMELIA.—Anticipation of her influence on his character . 89
30. Grouvelle.—Desaugiers.—Friendships with foreigners . . 90
31. To HIS PARENTS.—Political apprehensions 91
32. Offer of a Professorship 93
33. Plans.—Studies in the Library 94

Page

34. To AMELIA.—His faults 95
35. To HIS FATHER.—Society in Copenhagen.—Politics. 95
36. To AMELIA.—Effect of weather upon the spirits 97
37. To HIS PARENTS.—Souza.—Introductions in England . . 98
38. Visit to Hamburgh 99

EXTRACTS FROM HIS DIARIES.—VISIT TO HOLSTEIN . . 100

CHAPTER IV.

JOURNEY TO ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND.

JOURNEY TO ENGLAND.—ACQUAINTANCE THERE.—STUDIES IN EDINBURGH.—RETURN TO DENMARK.—RECEIVES AN APPOINTMENT IN COPENHAGEN 103

LETTERS.

39. To AMELIA.—The journey 109
40. Russell.—Rennell.—Sir Joseph Banks.—Want of genius among the English 110
41. The works of art in London.—Schönborn 112
42. The sights of London 113
43. Effect of the changes of nature upon the mind.—English political writings 115
44. The English stage 117
45. Visit to Pope's garden 117
46. To MOLTKE.—The citizens, scholars, and young men of England.—Resolutions 118
47. To AMELIA.—Journey from London to Edinburgh . . . 120
48. The same 123
49. Opening Lectures at the University.—Robinson.—Hope.—Home.—Gregory.—Mode of life 123
50. Mr. Francis Scott.—Studies.—Moorhouse 126
51. An unpleasant acquaintance.—The Scotts 129
52. National character.—Young men.—Women 131
53. Want of intimacy in English friendships, and neglect of the training of children 133
54. His own character 135
55. The English character.—Beneficial influence of physical studies.—English ideas of Germany 136
56. Study of philosophy in England 138
57. English literature 139
58. Characteristics of the Scotch 140
59. Plans and anticipations.—Taylor the Infidel 142

Page

60. *Interesting* people 144
61. The study of the natural sciences.—Playfair 145
62. English reserve 146
63. Visit to Dr. C. 147
64. The same 149
65. Journey into the Highlands 149
66. The same.—A Scotch farmer.—Sir John Murray . . . 150
67. Agricultural class in Scotland 153
68. Return to Copenhagen 154
69. Good resolutions 154
70. Parents and children.—Pecuniary circumstances . . . 155

CHAPTER V.

OFFICIAL LIFE IN COPENHAGEN.

MARRIAGE AND SETTLEMENT IN COPENHAGEN.—STOLBERG'S CONVERSION.—BOMBARDMENT OF COPENHAGEN.—STUDY OF ARABIC.—FRESH APPOINTMENTS.—RECEIVES PROPOSALS FROM PRUSSIA.—CONSENTS TO GO THERE 157

LETTERS.

71. To MADAME HENSLER.—Stolberg's conversion.—Modern Protestantism 170
72. Nelson's arrival 170
73. State of public affairs.—Schimmelman 173
74. The same 174
75. The bombardment 175
76. State of the city 177
77. Truce.—Loss of the English 179
78. To MOLTKE.—On the death of Moltke's first wife 180
79. To HIS PARENTS.—Study of Arabic.—State of the Jews under the Macedonian rule 181
80. To MOLTKE.—Present mode of life.—Study of Roman History.—Moltke's visit to Italy.—Public affairs.—Carnot . . 183
81. Love of paintings.—Style of ancient authors.—Livy.—Cicero.—Demosthenes.—Thucydides 187
82. Melancholy issue of the war.—Mournful anticipations respecting Germany 189
83. To HIS PARENTS.—Departure from Copenhagen 191

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRUSSIAN CIVIL SERVICE.

Page

ARRIVAL IN BERLIN.—DEFEATS OF THE PRUSSIAN ARMY.—FLIGHT TO MEMEL 194

LETTERS.

84. To HIS PARENTS—Consoling them under the present calamities . 195
85. To MADAME HENSLER.—Proceedings in Konigsberg . . . 197
86. State of public affairs.—Intrigues 199
87. To STEIN.—On Stein's dismissal from office 200

PROPOSALS FROM OTHER STATES.—TAKES AN APPOINTMENT IN THE COMMISSARIAT DEPARTMENT.—VON SCHOEN.—HARDENBERG PRIME MINISTER.—FLIGHT TO RIGA.—PROVISIONAL COMMISSION.—OFFER FROM KLEIN.—STEIN'S RETURN TO OFFICE 202

LETTERS.

88. To STEIN.—Stein's dismissal.—Public affairs.—Lord Hutchinson 209
89. Proposals from Russia 211
90. To HIS WIFE.—Journey to Bartenstein 211
91. Mournful aspect of affairs 213
92. The same.—Benningsen 213
93. Negotiations with Hutchinson.—Health 214
94. Negotiations with the Russians.—Loss of literary leisure . 215
95. To STEIN.—Stein's return to office.—Dislike to division of responsibility in administration.—Slavonic literature . . . 218
96. To MADAME HENSLER.—Retrospect.—Justifying himself for learning new languages 220

PROVISIONAL COMMISSION.—STEIN SENDS HIM TO NEGOTIATE DUTCH LOAN.—UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS.—VALCKENAER UNDERTAKES IT.—STEIN'S PROSCRIPTION.—ALTENSTEIN MINISTER.—APPOINTMENT AS MANAGER OF THE NATIONAL DEBT.—DUTCH LOAN.—HARDENBERG MINISTER.—REFUSES TO ACT WITH HIM.—APPOINTED HISTORIOGRAPHER. . . 224

LETTERS.

97. To MADAME HENSLER.—Journey from Memel to Landsberg . . 234
98. Meeting with his father 239
99. Thankfulness for the blessings of the past year 240

		Page
100.	To MOLTKE.—Different kinds of friendship.—Reminiscences.—Sismondi's Italian Republics.—Circular Letters.—Vondel	241
101.	To MADAME HENSLER.—Sorrow for Denmark	244
102.	King Louis Napoleon	245
103.	Influence of the mind on bodily health.—Objects to be aimed at in Charitable Institutions	245
104.	To MOLTKE.—On the death of Moltke's second wife	248
105.	To MADAME HENSLER.—Political anxieties.—Countess Moltke	249
106.	Moltke.—Stein's fall.—His character.—Approaching crisis	251
107.	To MOLTKE.—Consolation under trial.—His own future	253
108.	Dislike of medical men.—Mirabeau's "Essai sur le Despotisme."—Necker.—Carnot	255
109.	To MADAME HENSLER.—Intercourse.—Faith.—Stein	259
110.	Stein's proscription.—Political doctrines at the present conjuncture	261
111.	To MOLTKE.—Stein's character.—Altenstein.—Retirement from public life.—Massillon's writings.—Schiller's Thirty Years' War	262
112.	To MADAME HENSLER.—Valckenaer.—Dutch Poets	266
113.	Visit to his Father.—Reflections on political events.—Marjorian	268
114.	Grief at the late events.—Schill	270
115.	The same	271
116.	Stay at Nützschau.—Early intercourse between Greece and Rome.—Mirabeau on Finance.—Baader	272
117.	Successes of the Tyrolese.—Villers	275
118.	Journey to Konigsberg.—Ravages of war.—Stein	278
119.	State of political feeling.—Schelling.—Benvenuto Cellini.—Davy's Discoveries	281
120.	Official appointments.—Plans	284
121.	To HIS FATHER.—Finance.—Occupations	286
122.	To MADAME HENSLER.—Advantages of unrestricted commerce	289
123.	Dissatisfaction with the ministry.—Regret at the sacrifice of learned pursuits	289
124.	Hardenberg.—Intrigues	291
125.	To HIS FATHER.—Study of Arabic	292
126.	To MADAME HENSLER.—Opposition to intended financial measures	293
127.	To MOLTKE.—Account of proceedings.—Free trade.—New books	293
128.	To HIS FATHER.—Salt's expedition.—Condition of the Abyssinians.—Prospects of England	295

CHAPTER VII.

PROFESSORSHIP IN BERLIN.

Page

RETURN TO A LITERARY VOCATION.—PLANS OF STUDY.—EXTRAORDINARY MEMORY.—CHARACTERISTICS.—OPENING OF THE UNIVERSITY.—LECTURES ON ROMAN HISTORY.—SAVIGNY'S ACCOUNT OF THEM.—INTERCOURSE.—BEGINS THE HISTORY OF ROME.—VISIT TO HOLSTEIN.—LITERARY LABOURS.—FRENCH INVASION OF RUSSIA.—WISHES TO ENTER THE ARMY.—ESTABLISHMENT OF "THE PRUSSIAN CORRESPONDENT" 297

LETTERS.

129. To MADAME HENSLER.—Goethe 311
130. Savigny.—Pamphlets of the 17th century 312
131. Effect of his opening lecture 313
132. Early civilisation of Western Europe 314
133. Account of his occupations 315
134. The existence of pure disinterestedness.—Goethe's Theological Essay 316
135. The Danes.—History of Rome 319
136. De Serre 320
137. Detention of letters.—Aspect of public affairs.—Impressions received from Museum of Natural History 321
138. Goethe's "Dichtung und Wahrheit."—Madame de Stael . . 323
139. The same.—Mode of life 324
140. Schleiermacher's views of the ancient philosophers . . 325

LETTER FROM GOETHE TO NIEBUHR on receiving the First Volume of the History of Rome 326

141. To MADAME HENSLER.—Episodes in history 328
142. Inequality of style no fault 329
143. Johannes Müller 330
144. State of public affairs 331
145. Wilhelm Meister.—Goethe's mental history.—Animal magnetism 333
146. State of public affairs 335
147. The same.—Klopstock and his times 335
148. To V * *.—On religion.—Own mental history.—Rationalism.—Mysticism.—Catholicism.—The future of the Church. . 338
149. To MOLTKE.—Society in Berlin.—Reception of his History.—Ideal of historical writing 344

Page

150. To MADAME HENSLER.—The aim of Wilhelm Meister.—Oersted . 346
151. Reviewing.—Plato 348
152. Effects of war.—Antique works in glass 349
153. To PERTHES.—On the birth of a son.—Decline of art after Raphael.—English policy 350
154. To JACOBI.—History of his own intellectual development . . 352

LETTER FROM GOETHE TO NIEBUHR on receiving the Second Volume of the History of Rome 357

155. To MADAME HENSLER.—Herder.—Public Health 360
156. To PERTHES.—Studies in old German.—Goethe's Autobiography.—Julian 361
157. To MADAME HENSLER.—State of public affairs 363
158. The same.—Return of the French from Russia 364
159. The same 366
160. The public enthusiasm 366
161. To PERTHES.—Neander's "Julian."—Goethe and the Catholic Sacraments 367
162. To MADAME HENSLER.—The war of liberation 368
163. Training for the army.—Instances of patriotism.—General York 369
164. To PERTHES.—Political anticipations.—Arndt's "Landwehr und Landsturm" 373
165. To MADAME HENSLER.—Wish to join the army 374

CHAPTER VIII.

RETURN TO PUBLIC LIFE.

EMPLOYED IN CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL.—NEGOTIATIONS WITH ENGLAND.—ILLNESS IN PRAGUE.—RELATIONS WITH STEIN.—MISSION TO HOLLAND.—VISIT TO HOLSTEIN.—THE "RIGHTS OF PRUSSIA."—ILLNESS OF HIS WIFE.—DEATH OF HIS FATHER . 376

LETTERS.

166. To MADAME HENSLER.—Employments.—State of public affairs . 381
167. Retreat after the Battle of Bautzen 383
168. Heroism of the Prussians.—Journey to Reichenbach . . 387
169. To THE PRINCESS LOUISA.—Mournful aspect of affairs.—Relations with Stein.—Hardenberg 390
170. To MADAME HENSLER.—Stay at Reichenbach.—Proposed mission to England 392
171. To PERTHES.—Condition and prospects of Hamburgh.—Prussian soldiers 394

		Page
172.	To MADAME HENSLER.—Fears for Holstein.—Noble spirit of the nation	396
173.	Conditions of the Peace.—Madame de Stael	399
174.	Stay in Amsterdam.—Defeats of the Allies.—Character of the Dutch	401
175.	The war in France	403
176.	Prospects of France	405
177.	Behaviour of the Russian troops in France.—Prospects of the Bourbons	407
178.	Selfishness of the Dutch	409
179.	French literature	410
180.	Aspect of Holland after the war	411
181.	To PERTHES.—Evil of French influence	413
182.	Essentials to a reform of the Church	413
183.	To MADAME HENSLER.—Lessons to Crown Prince.—Aspect of Berlin.—Relations with France	414
184.	Aspect of Europe.—Lessons to Crown Prince.—Hume and Gibbon	415
185.	State of the new Prussian provinces.—Italy	417
186.	Style and punctuation.—England in the Middle Ages	418
187.	Congress of Vienna	419
188.	Society in Berlin.—Illness of his wife	420
189.	Animal Magnetism.—Apprehensions about the war	421
190.	On the death of his father	422

ERRATA TO THE FIRST VOLUME.

Page 203, line 22, *for* "friendships" *read* "friendship."
207, note, *for* "Letter xciii." *read* "xcv."
266, note, line 3, *for* "1767" *read* "1787."
282, line 20, *for* "heaven, even by" *read* "heaven by."
329, line 28, *for* "the most difficult" *read* "the most dissimilar."
335, line 17, *for* "Kettenberg" *read* "Klettenberg."
363, line 11, *for* "we have" *read* "we hear."

MEMOIR OF NIEBUHR.

CHAPTER I.

NIEBUHR'S CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH, FROM 1776 TO 1794.

BARTHOLD GEORGE NIEBUHR, the historian of Rome, was born at Copenhagen, on the 27th of August, 1776. He was the son of Carsten Niebuhr, the celebrated traveller. His family for as many generations as any thing is known respecting it, had been settled in Hadel, the north-western province of Hanover, where they occupied a small freehold that had descended from father to son.

Carsten Niebuhr, being a younger son, had not inherited the family farmstead, and as his ardent love of knowledge prompted him to seek some occupation which would afford more scope for its gratification than the agricultural operations that filled up the life of the peasants around him, he determined to become a land-surveyor. For this purpose he applied the small capital which his father had left him, to his support whilst studying under private tutors at Hamburgh, where he acquired the rudiments of a learned education,

and afterwards at the University of Göttingen. When, in 1757, the Danish government resolved to send an expedition of discovery to the East, Niebuhr was recommended by his tutor, Professor Kästner, one of the most distinguished German mathematicians of that day, to Count Bernstorff, who had applied to him for a person competent to conduct the geographical portion of the researches. After two years spent in preparatory studies, he received the rank of a lieutenant in the engineers, and in the autumn of 1760, set out on his travels with four companions, who each undertook a separate department of scientific research.

The difficulties and privations of the journey through Arabia, in 1763, proved so excessive that all Niebuhr's fellow-travellers sank under them within a year, and he was left to pursue the journey alone. He not only resolved to do so, but endeavoured to supply, as far as he was qualified, the place of his fellow-discoverers.

From this journey he returned to Copenhagen in 1767, after an absence of six years. Here he employed himself in revising his journals, and those of his fellow-traveller Forskaal, for publication.

He was on the point of undertaking a journey into the interior of Africa, when he fell in love with a young orphan lady, the daughter of the late physician to the King of Denmark. Though he had reached his fortieth year, this was the first love he had ever experienced, and its sincerity and depth may be judged of by the fact of his abandoning all the plans he had formed for his future life, and, instead of continuing the adventurous career which till then had alone possessed any charms

for him, resolving to settle down quietly in Copenhagen. He married in 1773, and had two children by his wife —a daughter, Christiana, born in 1774, and his son Barthold.

His position in Copenhagen became far less agreeable after the fall of his patron, Count Bernstorff, to whom he was personally much attached, and at length he requested his discharge from the military service, and an appointment of a civil nature in Holstein. He was accordingly made secretary * to the province of South Dithmarsh, and removed with his family to Meldorf, its chief town, in 1778.

The province of Dithmarsh, formerly a republic, and celebrated for its defence of its freedom, still retained certain privileges, and a free and independent communal constitution peculiar to itself. The inhabitants were of the same Frisian race as those of Carsten Niebuhr's native province; were a free peasantry like them, each man occupying and cultivating his own little freehold, and possessed the industry, frugality, and sturdy independence which usually characterise their order. The circumstance that his childhood and youth were passed among such a population probably contributed to the strong interest and sympathy with which Niebuhr always regarded this class. Frequent references occur in his letters to the peculiar institutions of these districts, and his practical acquaintance with them was often brought to bear upon his researches into the political and civil organisation of other countries, ancient as well as modern.

* Land-schreiber.

The external features of the country were not at all picturesque. Marshes extended over the greater portion of its surface, which was neither diversified by trees nor rising ground. Meldorf itself was a little antiquated country town, that had formerly been of much greater importance as the capital of the republic, but had sunk into decay through the ravages occasioned by repeated sieges; and its remoteness from any high road prevented an influx of trade, which might have revived its prosperity. Many of the old-fashioned houses were now unoccupied, and the quiet of the place was rarely broken by the carriage-wheels of a passing traveller, for it had no visitors but such as were drawn thither by some personal interest.

The want of any natural beauty in the scene of his early life rendered Niebuhr long insensible to impressions from this source. Thus, writing from Edinburgh in 1798, he says, that Nature has denied him the taste for picturesque scenery, but given him instead a perception of the sublime. In later years, however, he was keenly sensible to the charms of a beautiful landscape.

It will be readily conceived that Meldorf was, in many respects, an unfavourable position for Carsten Niebuhr, whose previous life had been passed, almost ever since he had been grown up, in the excitement of travelling through previously unexplored eastern regions, or amidst the society of the scholars and statesmen of Copenhagen. The fame of the celebrated traveller occasionally attracted a stranger, and many friends came to visit him; but sometimes for months together

he saw no one beside the inhabitants of the little town. Of these the clergy and officials of the place formed the circle with which the family associated. Among them there were few—and for a long while perhaps none—who had any taste for intellectual pursuits except so far as they were connected with their peculiar vocation. Carsten Niebuhr, however, employed himself in a most conscientious discharge of the duties of his office, and occupied his spare hours in building himself a house and laying out a garden, from which he then scarcely expected he should live to gather the fruit, but most of whose trees he long survived. Moreover, though accustomed to mix with the highest classes, he had never lost his fellow feeling with the peasantry to whom he belonged by birth, and when among his relations, whom he loved to visit, he could completely accommodate himself to their habits and enter into their modes of thinking. His son says of him, "He was and remained throughout his life a genuine peasant; with all the virtues and also the little failings of his order. He was certainly self-willed and obstinate; it was almost impossible to talk him out of any idea he had once taken up. This held good, too, of his favourable or unfavourable prepossessions with regard to persons. His character was perfectly irreproachable, and his morals extremely strict and pure. He was in all the relations of life unexacting and self-sacrificing."

Of Niebuhr's mother there exist very few notices. From the circle in which she was brought up, she was in all probability a woman of education and refinement. She is described as having been of a nervous, sensitive

temperament, probably in great measure the effect of her very delicate health; as excitable and warm-tempered, but at the same time easily pacified, affectionate, and tender. Her son is said to have resembled her much in person as well as in character.

An unmarried sister lived with her, with whom she usually spoke Danish, so that the children learnt both that and German as their native languages.

The parents, especially the father, seem to have devoted themselves to the training and education of their children with an attention rarely seen; but the frequent indisposition of Madame Niebuhr, with whom the air of the marshes did not agree, and his own ill-health, occasioned many interruptions to the otherwise happy tenor of her son's childhood. The boy had been very strong up to his fifth year, but he then had a dangerous attack of ague, which seemed quite to alter his constitution, for it became and remained through life very irritable, and highly susceptible both to mental and atmospheric influences. He had also several severe illnesses and accidents in his childhood. One of the latter was a bite from a dog, which obliged him to submit to very painful treatment; and all these circumstances contributed to increase his constitutional nervousness and timidity. Indisposition often rendered it needful for him to be kept within doors, and his mother's anxiety, which was heightened by her own delicate health, often unnecessarily prolonged these periods of privation from air and exercise.

On the whole, however, he and his sister led a very

merry life, romping about with their playfellows in a spacious house, or in large court-yards and gardens. When Niebuhr was about five years old, he took great delight in watching the erection of his father's new house at Meldorf. The elder Niebuhr was his own architect, and the child soon learnt to draw plans by watching his father at work, and asking him questions; he was constantly at his side during the progress of the building, and long afterwards retained an intelligent recollection of the proceedings of the workmen. His father was never weary of providing occupations and entertainments for his children. He had a skittle-ground made in the large court-yard, and in the winter a Russian mountain was put up in the garden. A very considerable collection of seals and coins was made for them, from which on Sundays they were allowed, as a treat, to take casts, and they eagerly studied heraldry in connection with these. The father even applied to several of his learned friends in Copenhagen for specimens to enrich this collection. He was not less willing to devote his own time to their pleasure. In summer he would help his son to build fortifications in the garden according to the rules of military art, which he afterwards taught the boy and his companions to attack and defend, likewise according to rule. In winter he often used to collect other children at his house in the evenings, and then set them to dance while he played for them on the violin. The Christmas festivities were seasons of unbounded enjoyment to Niebuhr in his childish years. He thus describes his blissful feelings, as a child at this festival,

in a letter dated Copenhagen, December 30th, 1797: —"I had the evening at liberty. I locked myself up in my own room, and luxuriated in the recollections of my departed childhood, whose best and sweetest pleasure was my intense happiness at these Christmas festivals. I was of a grateful disposition; a little thing would make me as happy as a prince, and I was not ill-behaved in my glee, which is as natural to many children as elation in prosperity is to grown-up people. A many-coloured tissue of bright memories floats over to me from those times, of which the most distinct images are connected with my eighth year. But with all of them there is associated a peculiar charm of eager outstretched expectation and dazzling surprise, succeeded by a vehement feeling of delight, occupation, and gratitude. Happy is he who begins anew to recal with joy those scenes which he once fancied barren of interest, and afterwards was obliged to rouse himself by reflection to prize, and contemplated with mournful feeling, as not only lost to him, but dead even in memory."

With such an education it was natural that the children should grow up good and intelligent, but the boy early gave indications of his extraordinary talents. His instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, seems to have begun in his fourth or fifth year, with his sister, under a tutor. He early distinguished himself by his quickness, ready apprehension and sure retention of what he learned, and, according to his sister's account, he soon got before her. He had always finished the tasks that were set them sooner than

she had, and then would roguishly dance round her, singing

"Rest is sweet when work is done."

Niebuhr says, in his Life of his father, "He instructed both of us in geography, and used to relate stories to us from history; he taught me English and French—at all events much better than I could have learnt them from any instructor the place afforded, and also a little mathematics, in which he would have gone further had he not been discouraged by the want of liking and talent in myself. It must be confessed that he grew weary of teaching, whenever he found any want of seriousness and interest in his pupils, for he never could understand how it was possible that they should find a difficulty in receiving, with delight and attention, any kind of instruction whatever, as he himself had always done."

These instructions must have commenced early, for in December, 1782, when Niebuhr was six years old, his father writes to his brother-in-law, Eckhardt, "Barthold has begun to-day to learn the Greek alphabet, and shall now proceed to write German in Greek characters." Somewhat later, writing to the same individual, he says, "He studied the Greek alphabet only for a single day, and had no further trouble with it; he did it with very little help from me. The boy gets on wonderfully. Boje says he does not know his equal; but he requires to be managed in a peculiar way. May God preserve our lives, and give us grace to guide him aright! Oh if he could but learn to control the warmth of his temper;

I believe I might say his pride. He is no longer so passionate with his sister; but if he stumbles in the least in repeating his lessons, or if his scribblings are alluded to, he fires up instantly. He cannot bear to be praised for them, because he believes that he does not deserve it. In short, I repeat it, he is proud; he wants to know everything, and is angry if he does not know it. May the Almighty guide and direct him!" Then he continues, "My wife complains that I find fault with Barthold unnecessarily. I did not mean to do so. He is an extraordinarily good little fellow, but he must be managed in an extraordinary way, and I pray God to give me wisdom and patience to educate him properly."

The Boje mentioned in this letter was the editor of the "Deutsches Museum," one of the earliest literary periodicals, not exclusively learned in its character, that appeared in Germany. He thus stood in connexion with most of the literary men of the day, and was himself a man of high intellect and taste. He had been appointed prefect of the province in 1781, and his settlement in Meldorf had an important influence on the life of the Niebuhrs. His society, and that of his wife, afforded the elder Niebuhrs, with whom they became very intimate, that unreserved intercourse with intelligent and highly cultivated people which they had previously missed at Meldorf, and Boje's large circle of friends imparted variety to their social life. The boy gained still more from these friends. He was allowed free access to Boje's extensive library, which was particularly rich in English and French as well as

German books, and gained thus much information which he could not have acquired elsewhere. But most of all, Boje's æsthetic and poetical turn of mind awakened in the child similar impulses, which would probably have otherwise remained dormant, as his father's cast of thought was essentially prosaic, and his method of education intentionally calculated to repress the imagination and to exercise the other faculties. How keenly alive he was to poetical impressions appears from a letter of Boje's written in 1783 : " This reminds me of little Niebuhr. His docility, his industry, and his devoted love for me procure me many a pleasant hour. A short time back I was reading 'Macbeth' aloud to his parents without taking any notice of him, till I saw what an impression it made upon him. Then I tried to render it all intelligible to him, and even explained to him how the witches were only poetical beings. When I was gone, he sat down (he is not yet seven years old), and wrote it all out on seven sheets of paper without omitting one important point, and certainly without any expectation of receiving praise for it ; for, when his father asked to see what he had written, and showed it to me, he cried for fear he had not done it well. Since then he writes down everything of importance that he hears from his father or me. We seldom praise him, but just quietly tell him where he has made any mistake, and he avoids the fault for the future."

The child's character early exhibited a rare union of the faculty of poetical insight with that of accurate practical observation. The amusements he contrived for

himself afford an illustration of this. During the periods of his confinement to the house, before he was old enough to have any paper given him, he covered with his writings and drawings, the margins of the leaves of several copies of Forskaal's works, which were used in the house as waste paper. Then he made copy-books for himself, in which he wrote essays, mostly on political subjects. He had an imaginary empire called Low-England, of which he drew maps, and he promulgated laws, waged wars, and made treaties of peace there. His father was pleased that he should occupy himself with amusements of this kind, and his sister took an active part in them. There still exist among his papers many of his childish productions; among others, translations and interpretations of passages of the New Testament, poetical paraphrases from the classics, sketches of little poems, a translation of Poncet's Travels in Ethiopia, an historical and geographical description of Africa, written in 1787 (the two last were undertaken as presents to his father on his birthday), and many other things mostly written during these years. His father probably in one way indirectly assisted these imaginative tendencies by his habit of relating his travels to him.

"I well remember," says Niebuhr in the Life of his father, "how he used to tell me stories in my childhood about the East and the structure of the universe; particularly in the evening, just before bed-time he would take me on his knee, and feed my imagination with these instead of fairy tales. The history of Mahomet, of the early Caliphs—especially of Omar and

Ali, for whom he had the deepest reverence—of the conquests and spread of Islamism, and the virtues of the heroes of the new faith, with the history of the Turks, were early imprinted on my memory in the most lively colours; nay, works on these subjects were among the first books put into my hands.

"I remember too, how, one Christmas Eve, when I must have been in my tenth year, he heightened the delights of the festival, by taking out of the almost magnificent chest which held his manuscripts, and was revered by the children and all the household, like the ark of the covenant, the volumes which contained the information he had collected in Africa, and reading them with me. He had taught me to draw maps, and now, encouraged and assisted by him, I soon produced maps of Habbesch and Sudan. . . . .

"He entered with the utmost indulgence and sympathy into my half old-fashioned, half childish ideas; helped me in the details of my castles in the air; conversed with me on all the topics of the day, and strove to give me clear conceptions of whatever subjects we talked upon —among other things, of fortifications, by encouraging me to measure out and excavate polygons under his eye, and with books and plans at hand."

From a letter of his father's, it appears that Niebuhr was able to read any English books without help when only in his eighth year. Somewhat later, Madame Boje, who was an admirable French scholar, kindly undertook to teach him that language, which he had begun with his father. The death of this lady, in 1786, was the child's first experience of heart-sorrow. After the

funeral his mother found him in the garden, rolling on the grass, almost wild with grief, and it was a long time before he recovered his spirits. This had the effect of turning his attention still more exclusively to the serious occupations to which he had been previously inclined, and in consequence his progress was more rapid than ever.

In his eighth or ninth year he had begun to receive private lessons, principally in the classics, from one of the masters of the Gymnasium. As the instruction in the lower classes of the school was defective, his father wished to keep him at home till he could at once enter the highest class. The master, however, was so deficient both in abilities and attainments that his incapacity could not escape the boy, and with a child's love of mischief he used to teaze him by learning his task within the appointed time, in order to oblige the tutor to read further than his preparation reached, when their respective positions were almost reversed, the boy assuming the character of a teacher, while the master had to sit by his side as a learner.

This state of affairs must have had a very injurious influence on the boy's character, as well as on the progress of his education, had not its effects on the one hand been neutralized by his unbounded desire of knowledge and remarkable abilities, and on the other by his good and affectionate disposition. But it is certainly surprising that he should have made such extraordinary progress in spite of it, and still more so that it should never have caused his industry to flag. He tells us, however, that his father assisted him in his Latin, and read Cæsar's

Commentaries with him, in which he, very characteristically, paid much more attention to the geography than to the grammar.

It is mentioned that from about this time the young Niebuhr shared the warm interest in literature which prevailed in Germany towards the close of the eighteenth century, and eagerly welcomed the appearance of any new work from the pens of Klopstock, Lessing, and Goethe. But that interest in politics, which became the master spring of his life, was first awakened at about the age of eleven. It is said that when the war with Turkey broke out in the year 1787, it so strongly excited the child's mind, that he not only talked of it in his sleep at night, but fancied himself in his dreams reading the newspapers and repeating the intelligence they contained about the war; and his ideas on these subjects were so well arranged, and founded on so accurate a knowledge of the country and the situation of the towns, that the realisation of his nightly anticipations generally appeared in the journals a short time afterwards. Of course this is not to be regarded as indicating a miraculous gift of prophecy in the boy, but only as showing with what distinctness all that he heard transferred itself to his imagination, and how capable his understanding was of combining the ideas he had received in their true relation to each other. Partly through his father's narratives, partly through his own geographical studies, those regions were as familiar to him as his native province. He had studied the nations inhabiting them, and their mode of warfare in history and the accounts of travellers, and had taken

great pains to gain accurate conceptions of the character and conduct of the various commanders in the war, from the journals and other sources of information. There are still extant some letters which he wrote at this time to his uncle Eckhardt, containing the grounds and proofs of his predictions.

This faculty of divination exhibited itself again during the early part of the French Revolution; when in several instances he not only anticipated the course of events with reference to the progress of the war, but also the direction which popular movements would take, the plans and objects of the revolutionary leaders, and the results of the measures adopted by the various parties, with so much correctness and precision as to excite the astonishment even of the eminent statesman Count P. A. Bernstorff, that such a mere youth should have so just and acute an appreciation of men and events. With equal correctness and certainty did he guess the plans of the commanders during the war from the marches and position of the armies, in which his exact and detailed geographical knowledge served as a guide to his judgment. He retained this faculty to a considerable extent during the whole of his life, but he possessed it in a higher degree in his earlier years, when he could concentrate the whole power of his mind on impressions of this kind.

From the time when the Turkish war broke out therefore, his attention was fixed upon historical events. But the disturbances in the Netherlands in the Emperor Joseph's time, excited in him a still stronger interest than the Turkish war, and it was heightened by his

acquaintance with a fugitive named De la Vida, who took up his residence in Meldorf.

It happened about this time that many friends of Boje's and Niebuhr's came to visit them from Copenhagen and Germany; several foreigners also came to Meldorf to make the acquaintance of the two authors. But the friend who had the most important influence on Niebuhr's studies was the well known poet Voss, * who had married Boje's sister.

During the frequent visits made to their brother by Voss and his wife, an intimacy sprang up between him and Niebuhr, which was only terminated by death Voss soon discovered the wonderful talents of the boy, won his attachment by many acts of kindness, and assisted him with advice and guidance in his classical studies. He found his reward in the boy's affectionate reverence for him, and adherence to his counsels.

In the conversations which took place among these friends and foreigners during their visits to Holstein, the boy, then eleven or twelve years of age, was frequently called to take part, and not seldom information was asked of him regarding geographical, statistical, historical and other subjects, and given in a manner which excited their astonishment. His father used often to talk of this with great pleasure in later years, when his darling son had become his joy and pride. His statistical knowledge was even then extraordinary; he was frequently assiduously engaged in subjects of this nature, such for instance as working out lists of mortality.

* The translator of Homer, author of "Luise," &c.

All this would no doubt have rendered him vain or proud, but that his simple education in strict principles of obedience, the example of his father, and frequent expressions of his mother showing how little she valued such things, proved a sufficient counterpoise. Against vanity he was moreover protected by an instinctive love of completeness in knowledge, and a repugnance to all merely superficial brilliancy. Pride might have proved a more dangerous enemy, as he could not remain ignorant of his own superiority, had not his generous and loving spirit enabled him to appreciate every genuine manifestation of humanity, and taught him to look up with deep humility and admiration to those great men of ancient and modern times, whom he regarded as heroes in thought and action.

In later years he was indeed conscious of his own value, and felt deeply hurt, when he thought himself not appreciated, or treated with intentional neglect, but he never over-estimated himself; in his letters we find frequent and touching proofs to the contrary. He displayed much magnanimity in his readiness to recognise eminent qualities and merits, even when they might come into collision with his own claims. No trace of envy, nor the slightest disposition to detraction, could ever be perceived in him. He inherited the distinguishing characteristics of his father, integrity and truthfulness—qualities that were so inherent in Carsten Niebuhr, that it was utterly impossible for him even to feel tempted to transgress their laws. Hence dishonesty and untruthfulness, with the vain love of display so

often combined with them, were of all faults those which Niebuhr most detested.

Little variation occurred in his life during three years, beyond the incidents already mentioned. Materials for the acquisition of knowledge were not wanting to him. Travels, especially in the other quarters of the world, were at all times his father's favourite reading, and of lighter literature he was able to obtain a constant supply from Boje, whose library was liberally stocked with works of this class.

He was now entering on his thirteenth year, and his father, feeling that the desultory instruction he had hitherto received was insufficient for him, determined on sending him to the Gymnasium at Meldorf, a step which appears to have been in accordance with the boy's own inclinations. In a letter dated November, 1788, Carsten Niebuhr says: "Barthold has not troubled his head so much about the Turks and the Emperor for some time past, but has made up his mind to enter the highest class at Easter, and is therefore busily engaged with the history of literature. He revels so in the Latin authors that I am almost obliged to restrain his ardour." He was not however exclusively absorbed in books, as, from a passage in one of his mother's letters written about this time, it appears that he was of great service to his father, during the autumn, in the financial calculations connected with the collection of extensive state revenues in South Dithmarsh. At Easter, 1789, Niebuhr entered the school, where he found himself at once by far the youngest, and considerably the most advanced, in his class. In

spite of this he was a favourite with his schoolfellows, a sure proof that he did not presume on his superior knowledge in his behaviour towards them. He remained, however, at school only till the Michaelmas of the following year, when the Principal, Dr. Jäger, found it necessary to dispense with his attendance, on the departure of most of the seniors, and the entrance of a much younger and less advanced set of boys into the highest class. Dr. Jäger offered, however, contrary to his usual practice, to give him an hour's private lesson every day, which, he said, considering Niebuhr's attainments and industry, would be sufficient to prepare him properly for the university.

This offer was gladly accepted, and the daily lesson was continued till Easter, 1794. Dr. Jäger read with him the more difficult passages of the Greek and Latin authors, and gave him hints which enabled him to read them by himself, to study grammar and Greek composition, and to exercise himself in Latin composition.

Other branches of knowledge he pursued by himself, except that his father occasionally assisted him in mathematics. There still exist plans of his daily studies, written at this time, which evince his extraordinary industry. More than half of each day he devoted to hard work, some hours to general reading, and a very short time to recreation and social pleasures. Yet in later life he often accused himself of indolence. The only ground he could have for this complaint was, that he prosecuted his studies rather under the guidance of inclination, than with reference to any definite object,

and hence those subjects, which from being less attractive to him cost him the most effort, were placed in the background. He certainly suffered at this time from the want of any competent guide. He read largely, and collected an immense amount of information, more indeed than he was able to digest properly, and there was no one who could teach him how to systematise his hoards of knowledge. He afterwards became aware of this, and was often much depressed by perceiving the confusion of ideas that resulted from it, particularly during the period from 1796 to 1798. When, as was not unfrequently the case, he found himself wandering involuntarily from the direct course in the studies he had undertaken, and perceived how much this habit of mind precluded his reaping due results from his labours, he complained with great bitterness of his self-incurred deficiency in energy and strength of will.

In 1791 he was confirmed by a clergyman of Meldorf, who was a friend of the family.

The French revolution, which broke out about this time, excited a strong interest in him from its commencement. Its effect on his mind differed however from the impression it produced on most of the young, and many of the elder persons of that day, who saw in it the promise of an era of glorious liberty, and many of whom carried their enthusiasm to such a height, as to view the most horrible excesses, simply as deplorable, but inevitable steps in the transition to a higher development of the human race. Hence arose a universal agitation, which brought forth many melancholy

results in the schisms that took place between men of different views, the arrogant tone of triumph which the enthusiasts assumed in their speeches and writings towards those whom they deemed the unenlightened and timorous men of the opposite party, and the divisions that ensued among friends and families. Niebuhr had studied history with an earnestness and thoughtfulness unusual at his age, and early recognised the workings and tendencies of the democratic movements. The horrors of anarchy and popular tyranny, which that revolution exhibited with such fearful distinctness, filled him with deep sorrow, and anxious misgivings for the fate of the rest of the world. He reverenced liberty when obtained through self-sacrifice and persevering effort in conformity with the law; and thus, in later life, he cherished a great respect for the Roman plebeians, who had conquered their rights and their constitution by such means alone. But all that tended to lawlessness, to the overthrow of social order, to establish the sway of mobs and demagogues, he detested from his earliest youth, because he saw therein the germs of future barbarism. Doubtless, however, he would not have acquired these views so early, nor entertained them through life with such unalterable firmness, if, on the one hand, they had not received confirmation on so gigantic a scale from those great events; and if, on the other, he had not brought to bear on all that was passing around him a most rare faculty of observation and combination, even at this early age. It is impossible to estimate how much the formation of his opinions may have been influenced by his father's way of thinking, whose

preference for the English, and antipathy to the French, were perhaps even exaggerated,* yet it cannot be doubted that his political sentiments were founded upon a real personal conviction.

In the course of the year 1792, the elder Niebuhr resolved to send his son to spend some time in Hamburgh; at a school which was then the most celebrated of its kind in Europe for instruction in modern languages and commercial science. Its founder and head master, Büsch, was an old friend of his, and the author of numerous highly esteemed works on commercial subjects.† Büsch's school was nearly unique of its kind, and attended by pupils from all parts of Europe. His circle of acquaintance was one of the largest in Hamburgh. All the learned and intellectual society of the city assembled at his house; all foreigners of distinction brought letters of introduction to him; and his wife enlivened by her wit and intelligence the society, which then counted among its members the poet Klopstock, the geographer Ebeling, and the more celebrated physician Reimarus (the first who practised inoculation, and who distinguished himself in that day by his advocacy of free trade and political reforms), and among its occasional guests,

* "He saw in that nation [the French] our natural hereditary enemies; and I remember he was delighted when the War of the Revolution broke out, not because he sided with the counter-revolutionary party, but because he hoped that the conquered German and Burgundian provinces might be regained—provinces which he always included in Germany when teaching his children geography."—*Life of C. Niebuhr, by his Son.*

† Of which the most remarkable are "Outlines of a History of the most eminent Commercial Enterprises of the World," "Handbook of the Collective Commercial Sciences," and "The Library of Commerce."

Lessing and other noted literary men. The young Niebuhr was not to be placed merely on the footing of a scholar, but was to be admitted to the social intercourse of the house. This resolution seems to have been prompted by Carsten Niebuhr's wish that his son should choose a diplomatic career, for which he regarded a residence in Büsch's house as an excellent preparation. He also wished that his son, who had lived up to this time entirely at home, should acquire a wider knowledge of the world and the tone of good society, and learn to take an interest in subjects relating to practical life. He felt too that his boy's attachment to home was excessive, and that his too eager pursuit of his studies threatened lasting injury to his health. The visit was offered the young Niebuhr as a reward for his industry, his father sincerely believing that it would conduce as much to his pleasure as to his improvement. He was, however, disappointed in his expectations. The youth was received and treated most kindly by Büsch, but the continual whirl of amusement and occupation in the house, the contrast presented by the ordinary topics of conversation and the pleasantries in so mixed a society, to those he had been accustomed to, produced a most painful impression on his mind. He felt restless and dissatisfied in this new world, where his most cherished sentiments were unregarded or misunderstood. It was indeed natural that the elder men around him should take little notice of the thoughts of a youth of sixteen, yet in many respects he could not but feel conscious of his own superiority to them. Klopstock and Ebeling, however,

liked and appreciated him, and in their society he felt at ease. The former frequently invited him to his house, and this acquaintance was the most valuable result of Niebuhr's stay in Hamburgh, for he was too home-sick to make much progress in his studies. He implored his father to allow him to leave, declaring that his residence in Hamburgh was an utter waste of time; and when his father did not immediately accede to his request, repeated his entreaties with such vehemence, that the elder Niebuhr yielded, and fetched him back after a three months' absence. It may be doubted whether he would not have acted more wisely for his son's true interests, if he had stood firm; for though it is very probable that young Niebuhr would have advanced less rapidly in his studies amidst the distractions of Hamburgh than in the quiet of home, the life in Büsch's house among young people of his own age, would perhaps have furnished precisely the discipline needed to neutralise the effects of his solitary education at home, which had stimulated the precocity of his intellect, and the over-sensitiveness of his temperament. Perhaps in after life Niebuhr's defect as a practical statesman, was that he set too high a standard for mankind at large, instead of taking them as he found them, which made it difficult for him to work with others, and rendered him liable to despair of men and classes, as soon as he detected their moral deficiencies. This tendency—the natural result of his own disinterestedness of character, and the unusually high moral tone of the society in which his early years were passed—might have been corrected, had he been forced to come into daily contact with a number of

young men of about the average stamp, at an age, when he could not have made them treat him otherwise than as one of themselves.

His return to Meldorf was, however, a great immediate comfort to his family, as his father was soon after seized with a dangerous and tedious illness, which for a long time incapacitated him for performing the duties of his office. During his convalescence Niebuhr undertook the financial part of his duties, and the fact that he was capable of performing them at so early an age, may be regarded as the first indication of his future eminence as a financier.

After this interruption Niebuhr resumed his studies, and his private lessons with Dr. Jäger. From this time he employed himself in collating MSS., which Münter sent him from Copenhagen, and Heyne from Göttingen. The latter wished that the superintendence of Niebuhr's studies should be confided to him, and it was his father's intention to send him to Göttingen after he had passed through the two years' course of study in his native university of Kiel, necessary to render him eligible for receiving any official appointment in his own country.

His favourite intercourse during this period was with a young man named Prehn, a few years older than himself, who had been a playfellow of his childhood, and was now appointed secretary to the prefecture. The two friends, who were very different in other respects, had a common interest in pursuing their researches into the constitution and condition of their native province.

The time from Michaelmas 1792 to Easter 1794, was spent in his father's house, amidst the employments and circumstances already mentioned. He was now more occupied than formerly with the study of modern languages. With French, English, and Italian he had long been familiar; the sale at this time of some books cast on shore from a wreck incited him to learn Spanish, and, soon afterwards, Portuguese. A letter from his father, dated December 1807, gives a summary of the languages with which he was acquainted. "My son has gone to Memel with the commissariat of the army. When he found he should probably have to go to Riga, he began forthwith to learn Russian. Let us just reckon how many languages he knows already. He was only two years old when we came to Meldorf, so that we must consider—1. German, as his mother tongue. He learnt at school—2. Latin; 3. Greek; 4. Hebrew; and besides, in Meldorf he learnt—5. Danish; 6. English; 7. French; 8. Italian;—but only so far as to be able to read a book in these languages;—some books from a vessel wrecked on the coast induced him to learn—9. Portuguese; 10. Spanish;—of Arabic, he did not learn much at home, because I had lost my lexicon, and could not quickly replace it;—in Kiel and Copenhagen, he had opportunities of practice in speaking and writing French, English, and Danish; in Copenhagen, he learnt — 11. Persian (of Count Ludolph, the Austrian minister, who was born at Constantinople, and whose father was an acquaintance of mine), and 12. Arabic, he taught himself; in Holland he learnt—13. Dutch; and again in Copenhagen—

14. Swedish, and a little Icelandic; at Memel — 15. Russian; 16. Slavonic; 17. Polish; 18. Bohemian; and, 19. Illyrian. With the addition of Low German, this makes in all twenty languages. Forgive this effusion of my heart concerning my son. I did not mean to boast of him."

During these years, Niebuhr often grieved over the progress of events in France. The scenes of horror in 1791-3, almost disgusted him with Europe, and he and his sister often turned their thoughts towards America, hoping to find there, with a few friends, the repose which seemed to have forsaken the old world. Even then his mind was often visited by that anxiety about the retrogression of the present generation towards barbarism, which troubled the last months of his life. In later years, he would certainly never have thought of America as a place to settle in. Both the want of any proper nationality among that amalgam of races, and the absence of any historical antecedents in their circumstances, as well as the predominance of the mercantile interest, and the want of literary society, would have prevented that country from ever becoming a congenial residence to him.

CHAPTER II.

NIEBUHR'S COLLEGE LIFE, FROM 1794 TO 1796.

At Easter, 1794, Niebuhr commenced his studies at the University of Kiel. He found his position and society here infinitely more agreeable than in Hamburgh. Indeed, he could hardly have been more favourably situated, for the students were at that time in general characterised by industry and morality, while most of the professors were men of distinguished talent, and appear to have shown great kindness in admitting the students to friendly intercourse with themselves. He found in the aged Professor Hensler, who was head physician to the University, and a friend of his father's, a man full of intellect, feeling, and information, to whose house he had constant access. Of all the professors, there was none who attracted Niebuhr's lasting affection so much as Dr. Hensler; but in his house he found another friend, who exercised a still greater influence over him,—one in fact, who, by what she was, and what she did, affected his development and his destiny more, perhaps, than any other human being. She was the widow of a son of Dr. Hensler, who had died very young, and from that time she had resided with her father-in-law, to whom she supplied the place of a daughter. She was a woman of strong and healthy

mind, with much decision of character, combined with deep feeling and no ordinary cultivation,—one of those women whose clear and correct judgment and ever-ready sympathy render them through life the person to whom all their friends instinctively turn for advice and assistance. She was six years older than Niebuhr—a circumstance which prevented any shyness and restraint on her side, while the unusual maturity of his character rendered him not too young to be a companion to her.

The professors with whom Niebuhr chiefly associated were, besides Hensler, Hegewisch, author of "The History of German Civilisation," &c.—a man of considerable talents and attainments, but of no great depth as a critic; Cramer, a well known professor of Roman law; and Reinhold, author of "Letters on the Philosophy of Kant," and several other philosophical works, one of the first who drew attention to Kant's philosophy, which he expounded in his lectures.*

Among the young men he soon made the acquaintance of several with whom he afterwards formed sincere and lasting friendships. Of these, were Conrad Hensler, a relative of Dr. Hensler's; Thibaut, afterwards a celebrated professor of jurisprudence in Kiel, and subsequently in Heidelberg; a M. von Späth, who had previously served in the army; and a French emigrant, named Dachon de Billière, a man of eccentric character but high principle.†

* He was son-in-law to Wieland, and the predecessor of Fichte at Jena.

† Though he did not stir from his house for weeks together, he spent nearly all his leisure hours in reading travels, many of which he obtained from the elder Niebuhr; and he used to beg him to send him none in any country nearer than Turkey, because all that described European countries reminded him so strongly of the Revolution that he could not bear to read them.

Reinhold, who had just removed to Kiel from Jena, excited so great an enthusiasm for the study of philosophy that the better class of students were ashamed to neglect it. This had an elevating influence, too, on their moral character. Reinhold also founded a club, to which both the professors and the students were eligible, where the meetings were designed principally for scientific conversation, and concluded with a frugal supper. Niebuhr became a member of this club, but he did not join in any of the societies confined to the students.

He studied at Kiel till Easter, 1796. During his first year, he attended lectures on German and Danish history, by Hegewisch; on jurisprudence and the institutes, by Cramer; on logic, metaphysics, and moral philosophy, by Reinhold; on natural philosophy, organic and inorganic chemistry, by Eimbke; on æsthetics, by Nasser. What lectures he attended during the latter year of his stay his friends cannot recollect with certainty: most probably some on anthropology by Hensler, and the Pandects by Cramer. Philology and history continued to be his favourite pursuits, but he carried them on by himself, and attended none of the college lectures on these subjects, excepting the two courses by Hegewisch, before mentioned. Though in later life he was far from possessing a metaphysical cast of mind, it appears that at this time he devoted himself with great zeal to the study of philosophy, particularly the system of Kant. The Greek and Roman classics were at all times the most attractive to him; but while at college he only permitted himself to read them as a sort of

reward for industry. When reading the ancients, he completely lived in their world and with them. He once told a friend, who had called on him and found him in great emotion, that he often could not bear to read more than a few pages at a time in the old tragic poets; he realised so vividly all that was said and done and suffered, by the persons represented. He could see Antigone leading her blind father—the aged Œdipus entering the grove,—he could catch the music of their speech, and felt certain that he could distinguish the true accent of the Greeks, though he could not reproduce it with his barbarian tongue.

His liveliness of imagination, and quickness and depth of feeling, rendered his mental condition extremely variable; his sense of enjoyment was so keen, that anything which gave him pleasure would at times affect him even to tears, while, on the other hand, trivial circumstances would occasion him an unwarrantable degree of annoyance, or even excite him to momentary asperity. His sensitive physical temperament aggravated this tendency, and when he was suffering in body or had over-studied himself, he became dull and incapable of mental exertion, and in such cases he would often fancy that his faculties were giving way; but an interesting conversation with a friend, or a literary work of importance, was sufficient to recover him from this state, and restore him to his mental powers.

The series of letters to his parents only extends to the middle of December 1794, when it is interrupted, and we have no more addressed to them from that

time to January 1798. Of all that he wrote in the succeeding years, but few have been preserved. After the death of his father, he requested to have them returned to him, and all except those inserted in the "Lebensnachrichten" were destroyed when his house at Bonn was burnt down in 1830. Were the complete series still in existence, there would be little to add to their records of his life up to the time of his father's death.

The following extracts will give a picture of his life and mind during the first year of his university career, beginning when he was seventeen years and a half old.

I.

TO HIS PARENTS.

KIEL, 11*th May*, 1794.

MY DEAR PARENTS,

When I remember the anxiety and sorrow we felt at parting, my gloomy ideas of this place, my melancholy at being transplanted, from my quiet peaceful occupations in the midst of you all, to this noisy town, and the deep silence of my solitary room, &c., how glad and thankful I am to have found every thing better than my expectations. I would give a great deal—yes, what I prize most of all, some days of my future stay with you—if you could know a little sooner how happy I am,—if you could know it at this moment while I am writing.

On Friday morning I paid my calls. I found neither Dr. Hensler nor Hegewisch nor Cramer at home: thence I went to call on Ehler, who was supplying the place of Fabricius, as Dean of Philosophy, during his travels. Then I took a walk, and enjoyed, even to sadness, the beauty of the scenery, the blue sea, the flowery meadows, the green forest, and the singing of the nightingales. Hensler sent for me to come to him at six. You may believe I did not

keep him waiting. I had expected a friendly reception, but not such a one as I found. I was shown into his library, where he came to me, and accosted me with such hearty kindness that he won me instantly. Other people came in afterwards; but they did not put a stop to our conversation, indeed Eimbke rather helped it on. As I went away, Hensler told me I might come again as often as I liked; and he would do with me as he had done with some of his young friends before, send me into the library if he was busy. I shall certainly not neglect this opportunity of gaining both information and enjoyment. I told him of my great wish to see Reinhold, and he promised, when he saw him, to try and get me an invitation. Yesterday I found Hegewisch at home at last, but only for a few minutes; he had to go to an examination. He was very friendly, and said he hoped we should have many walks together. By his invitation I remained with Mrs. H., the first cultivated woman I have seen as yet in Kiel, except those whom I may have seen at the windows perhaps without knowing them. Carl Cramer's* misfortune was the subject of our conversation. She was so polite as to invite me to call frequently. Thence I went to the Library, where I made the acquaintance of Kordes, who was extremely civil to me.

I have just returned from Dr. Hensler's again. I am to call on Reinhold to-morrow. Hensler has obtained permission for me to do so. I am in a fever of impatience. Hensler assures me, he never saw any man whose first address so instantly prepossesses you in his favour and so irresistibly wins your heart. If I could but feel as free with him as with Hensler! I am convinced that Hensler takes a great interest in me. My ideas about the origin of the Greek tribes, the history of the colonisation of the Greek cities, and my notions in general about the earliest migration from west to east, are new to him, and he thinks it probable that they may be correct. He exhorts me to work them out,

* The brother of the professor of this name before mentioned, and likewise a professor in Kiel. He lost his professorship at this time, owing to his openly expressed admiration of the French Revolution.

and bring them into as clear a form as I can. But he will only allow me to study philosophy for the present; I am to let other matters rest, or at least do very little in them. I think, however, he will let me do more as soon as my progress in philosophy will allow of it without injury to my health, about which I have consulted him. I am much pleased to find that Hensler agrees with my political principles; and he is equally pleased that Reinhold agrees with him. My dinner society is very good. Among others I single out the advocate Jahn as a man of talent; but I have not yet had much conversation with him. Hensler has arranged my course of study thus:—German History, with Hegewisch; Jurisprudence, with Cramer; Logic and Metaphysics, with Reinhold; and Æsthetics.

II.

KIEL, *27th May*, 1794.

I just fancy myself back again among you all with great vividness, and can assure you honestly, that it gives me much more pleasure than pain. I prize the advantages of Meldorf, and can tell you, that though I am very happy here, I learn nothing, putting Reinhold's instructions, and some other things, out of the question, compared to what I could at home, in my own room; for as to German History, I already know nearly all that comes in the lectures, and could learn more by myself. But this I say only to my most intimate friends, and to them in such a way that they can see I am very well contented here on the whole. I have now, I think, completed the circle of my more intimate friends, and do not mean to extend it. It consists of Reinhold, Hensler, Hegewisch, and, among the young men, Purgstall, Maisl, Meier of Altona, Thibaut, and Conrad Hensler.

Of philosophical books which I do not understand, I have so far a superfluity. Since I heard that Fichte has begun to defend the right of insurrection, (which, however, Kant and Reinhold abhor,) and to deny the obligation of treaties, I begin to fear that men are abusing the mysteries of

philosophy, from which I expected, and still expect, the elucidation and solution of the most important questions, to the establishment of the most dreadful sophisms, or at least that a skilful hand may so abuse them. And then, if philosophy itself be turned against the cause of right and civil order, and the power of the mob be backed by the authority of brilliant fallacies, what refuge from their united tyranny is left us but death?

I long to get back to my ancients, my best friends, to whom I owe all my thoughts, at least on such subjects, to Aristotle and Cicero. Oh that it were permitted me, if only like the last of these, to attain an imperfect wisdom, and to expound it with his majesty of style!

III.

KIEL, *7th June*, 1794.

This day twelvemonth was a memorable one to me. It was the day I left Meldorf for Hamburgh. I do not know whether the recollection of it is cheering or depressing, but I am very fond just at present of looking back upon many things that occurred this time last year. This day month too, I left you for the second time in my life. The first month in Hamburgh did not pass away with such happy speed as this has done. There I suffered from illness and melancholy; here I enjoy health and spirits. And even if I had learnt little or nothing of lasting value to me, except from Reinhold and Hensler (though I have learnt a great deal besides) should I have cause to regret that I cannot pursue my favourite study here, at least never with sufficient assiduity? Ought not the prospect of finding no insuperable difficulties in philosophy, to rejoice me as it does, even though I may never be able to master it entirely, but only to comprehend its general outline? I do not flatter myself with the idea that I shall ever become, properly speaking, a critical philosopher. No, that I dare not hope for, because I cannot devote my whole life to this study, and indeed think I can employ it more profitably in active exertion. The philosopher's satisfaction ends with speculation. But,

as Bolingbroke justly remarks, he who speculates in order to act, goes further. I could wish I had it in my power to do this, and to that end, should like to devote two years to philosophy, and then to study jurisprudence as long as might be necessary. But if I must be content with one year of philosophy, and even divide the latter half of that with jurisprudence, I will at least as far as I can, strive to gain a thorough insight into the system of the Critical philosophy, and when I have once got on the right track, follow it perseveringly till I have found either truth, or the impossibility of truth. It would certainly have been a good thing for me, to have inured myself previously to meditation, by the study of other systems of philosophy; and yet on the other hand, as it is, I can plant everything in a fresh soil; no preconceived notions stand in the way of those which Reinhold communicates to me. If it were but possible for him to develope all his ideas (or even some of them) in my mind with half his clearness of thought, how would even my scepticism vanish! But unfortunately I have only been able so far to clear up my ideas to a very small extent, and have to struggle with obscurity on all sides. True, it is gradually dispersing, and has already given way on some points; still, I constantly feel my weakness, and wish for more power of thought than I possess. We have now come to the faculty of Cognition, consequently have finished the Representational faculty. In the holidays I intend to study all we have gone through as thoroughly as I can, that when Reinhold returns, I may lay before him the principal points which I do not understand.

I have received the globe through H., and with the assistance of that and Dalrymple's Collection of Voyages of Discovery, I mean to begin a description of the South Sea; this will form the subject of my first essay; the second will be on the regions about Greenland, Iceland, and the doubtful Friesland, with reference to the voyages of the Zeni. It may also include some islands, probably fabulous, and certainly not now in existence, which on this, and other old globes, are placed between Europe and America. You see

how busy I am. Whether I shall be able to accomplish all this, time will show; but it is a work in which no one can help me.

I have caught a little cold, so I did not get up till nearly six this morning, and have not done much to-day beyond beginning my researches concerning Solomon's Islands, about which our globe gives quite new results. Yesterday and to-day I have read a great deal in Pope, and it has quite refreshed me.

How much I shall have to read merely about Solomon's Islands! Are they really the New Hebrides of Bougainville, Cook and Forster? or are they the Britannias of Carteret and Dampier?

I often take walks with Maisl. Our conversation is mostly about history; for as he attends Hegewisch's lectures on Universal History, as well as those on German History, he repeats to me the most important of Hegewisch's propositions in a condensed form, which I am often forced to dispute, but have notwithstanding almost as great a respect for Hegewisch's learning as for Hensler's, which is saying everything.

I have not as yet fully explained to anybody but Hensler, my ideas about the colonisation of Greece, and the whole of Asia Minor, including Armenia, from the West. For the peopling of the rest of Asia, I assume, 1. the Aramaic or Assyrian race, to which belong the Arabs, Jews, Syrians, Assyrians, Chaldees, and Medes, of more or less pure descent; 2. the Indo-Persic; 3. the Tartar; 4. the Mongul; and 5. probably the Chinese race. Taking this as a basis, we can proceed further, and shall obtain everywhere at last the same result, viz., that these great national races have never sprung from the growth of a single family into a nation, but always from the association of several families of human beings, raised above their fellow animals by the nature of their wants, and the gradual invention of a language, each of which families probably had originally formed a language peculiar to itself. This last idea belongs to Reinhold. By this I explain the immense variety of

languages among the North American savages, which it is absolutely impossible to refer to any common source, but which, in some cases, have resolved themselves into one language, as in Mexico and Peru for instance; and also the number of synonyms in the earliest periods of languages. On this account, I maintain that we must make a very cautious use of differences of language as applied to the theory of races, and have more regard to physical conformation, which latter is exactly the same for instance in most of the Indian tribes of North America. I believe further that the origin of the human race is not connected with any given place, but is to be sought everywhere over the face of the earth: and that it is an idea more worthy of the power and wisdom of the Creator, to assume, that he gave to each zone and each climate its proper inhabitants, to whom that zone and climate would be the most suitable, than to assume that the human species has degenerated in such innumerable instances. Here is one of the most important elements of history, still remaining to be examined,—that which is, in truth, the very basis upon which all history must be reared, and the first principle from which it must proceed. This of all subjects should be thoroughly investigated in the first place; and then (to which philosophy is necessary) a universal history ought to be written, which should exhibit all nations from the same point of view. This point of view Reinhold beautifully defines as the relation between reason and sensation. When this universal history is completed, the separate history of each country should follow. This is the way in which I would teach history, if I had Hegewisch's learning and position. But the latter I wish for less and less the more I know of it. H. began to talk to me one day as if he wished to attract me to the academical profession; but withdrew his proposals, when I assured him that I should desire a life of greater activity, and more opportunity to make myself useful, especially in such times as ours. This he quite approved of, and advised me, therefore, zealously to study Roman law, and pitied me for having to devote so much time to other things; but as to this too everything depends upon the

point of view from which we regard our studies, and the manner in which we pursue them. I have not yet told Hensler of our projects, because they are growing rather problematical to me; but he bids me take courage whatever happen, for, he says, I should be certain to rise by my own exertion without any occasion for servility. That I voluntarily go to no parties, has his full approbation. They rob me of the evening and the morning hours; and, what is still worse, of the calmness of mind which must be undisturbed by dissipation, if one is to work.

IV.

KIEL, *6th July*, 1794.

My health is but indifferent. Hegewisch leaves this week, and then the lectures on German History will be over. I mean to employ the hours I shall then have at liberty, in walking to Düsternbrook, with a book, and reading there till towards noon. Of course, I shall not at first take the "Critique of Pure Reason," or the "Theory of the Representational Powers," to amuse myself with; but a simple historical work or a poet, Hume, Demosthenes, Pope, or something of that kind. The "Critique of Pure Reason," however, is not comparatively so very difficult, and some chapters seem to me quite easy to understand, very forcible, and when you are able to enter properly into their spirit, very clear. Hensler thinks me already quite competent to take the "Critique" in hand, but forbids me to do so on account of my health.

My acquaintance with M. has been put a stop to by the difference of our principles; and what is strange, not in politics, but philosophy. He denies the freedom of the will, and the moral law; is a fatalist and indifferentist: I subscribe to Kant's principles with all my heart. I have broken with M., not from any dispute we have had, but on account of the detestable conclusions which necessarily follow from his opinions,—conclusions that absolutely annihilate all morality. I really loved him notwithstanding, but with such principles I could not be his friend.

V.

KIEL, 20*th July*, 1794.

You will see from the above that I am in good spirits. My occupations acquire new charms for me, and grow easier too, the further I advance and the more I get used to them. . . .

My head swims when I survey what I have yet to learn,—philosophy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, natural history. Then, too, I must perfect myself in history, German and French, and study Roman law, and the political constitutions of Europe as far as I can, and increase my knowledge of antiquities; and all this must be done within five years at most, so far as a foundation can be laid in that time, for truly it will not allow me to accomplish more than that with regard to most of these things; and it would be hard indeed if I could not find time and opportunity afterwards to complete the superstructure. I *must* know all these things, but how I shall learn them, Heaven knows! That I shall require them, as a learned man, or in any position I may occupy, I am fully convinced.

VI.

KIEL, 27*th July*, 1794.

My health and spirits are quite restored, my dearest parents. I feel that I have made some progress in philosophy, and cleared the way for much more, so that I have not laboured in vain. I see at last what I have yet to learn, and why I must learn it. I have received much assistance lately in this respect from a treatise of Spinoza's, which has wonderfully strengthened my mind and cleared up my thoughts. . . . I mean to make an abstract of all the best works that I read in every department of my studies, and arrange every subject under certain heads. . . I think I shall make the most rapid progress in knowledge, by perfecting my acquaintance with the sciences that I have begun. In the seven years between this and my twenty-fifth year, I should like to lay a foundation in all the sciences that will be useful to me, so that afterwards I might

be able to keep pace with the progress of the age on all subjects, and to advance before it on some points, which I shall be all the more capable of doing from understanding them in their connection with the rest. I think that then (though I might reach my thirtieth year before completing the work that would only serve as an introduction to any creative labours of my own in science,) I should know all that Bolingbroke requires for a competent statesman. And though I have quite lost the foolish ambition which made me think of aiming at high offices of state, the inward gain would still be left me, the consciousness of having developed my powers, and rendered myself fit for usefulness.

VII.

KIEL, *2nd August*, 1794.

. . . . I now know who are the men worth knowing at the university, and can reckon all the best of them among my friends, or at least my acquaintance. We form a sort of circle, which Thibaut and I had thought of bringing together in a literary club, but we shall hardly be able to manage it this winter.

Purgstall's love for Greek is on the wane, since he took to spending the Saturdays and Sundays in the neighbouring country places; and it makes me dislike the hour from six to seven, that I sacrifice to him out of friendship. I am vexed at it, and yet I do not like to let him see this, lest he should lose all liking for the lesson; in other respects I like him as well as ever; perhaps, too, he is suffering from home-sickness.

I hope much from the winter, when I shall take advantage of the long candle-light evenings in a warm room. The winter after, I shall spend at home, and go on with philosophy, ancient literature, my researches in Greek history, and mathematics. How much I shall be able to get through then in six or seven months! I should like at that time, by way of practice, to deliver some lectures on the principles of the Critical Philosophy to my friends. I should not bring forward any new doctrines; I have not capacity for that. Probably I might throw light on some points, but history is

my vocation, and to that I shall perhaps some day make my philosophical acquisitions subservient. I shall very likely attend lectures on the Institutes this winter. Reinhold's "Letters,"* to say the truth (and a great part of the "Elucidations,") are, to my taste, as insipid as his "Theory" is delightful.

If I could introduce to you the friends with whom I am on terms of intimacy, or describe them to you, you would say I had chosen well, and esteem me happy to have found such in Kiel. Of some, I say myself, and you know I am not over-modest, that they are better than I; of most, those would say so, who know us and are impartial. . . . In Thibaut I have nothing to censure but a little obstinacy, and a leaning to democracy, which does not, however, prevent my loving him, since it seems to me excusable in him, considering his descent from the refugees of the last century; his apparent coldness gives way with frequent intercourse, and changes into the sincerest friendship; more industry, more vigour of intellect, more irreproachable virtue and integrity, cannot be desired in a human being than he possesses. . . .

VIII.

21st August, 1794.

. . . . Yesterday afternoon I felt very gloomy; I set off to Hensler's to cheer myself up. I went into the library, and had not been long there, when the servant was sent to ask me down stairs. I found, besides Hensler's wife and daughter-in-law, the mother and sister of the latter—consequently countrywomen of mine from Dithmarsh—and several others. I felt then really, to a painful degree, the timidity and bashfulness before ladies of which I wrote to you lately. However much I may improve in other society, I am sure I must get worse and worse every day in their eyes; and so, out of downright shyness, I scarcely dare speak to a lady; and as I know, once for all, that I

* The Letters on Kant's Philosophy, mentioned above.

must be insupportable to them, their presence becomes disagreeable to me. Yesterday, however, I screwed up my courage, and began to talk to Miss Behrens,* and young Mrs. Hensler. Now, in gratitude and candour, I must confess that they were sociable enough towards me to have set me at my ease if my shyness were not so deeply rooted. But it is of no use. I avoid them, and would rather be guilty of impoliteness, by avoiding them, than by speaking to them, which I should now feel to be the greatest impoliteness of all. At last, however, especially through taking a walk with Hensler and Dr. Behrens, I got so roused up that my awkwardness vanished, and I went home cured. Thus I was healed by Hensler's words and looks.

IX.

KIEL, *7th September*, 1794.

. . . . On Monday afternoon I received, through Purgstall, an invitation from Madame de R. to spend the evening with her. She had been two days floating about on the sea between here and Alsen, or whatever other more flowery mode of expression she may have selected. I tell you—and I do not know how I shall keep it to myself in Meldorf—she was insufferable, beyond comparison worse than on any former occasion. With a tone of great unction, she began to hold forth in such an absurd style, upon philosophical subjects, that I could not conquer myself so far as to let my silence be construed into assent. My objection was indeed as modestly urged as if it had been directed against Reinhold himself; that I held due to the lady; but it only caused the fair philosopher to produce her fancied arguments with all the greater earnestness. Positively I cannot conceive how we could all take her for a philosopher. She is nothing but a miserable twaddler, shallow and insipid, words without ideas. Then, too, I have learnt to see through her conversational artifices. Three times, if not more, have I heard her tell the same anecdote; twice within the last

* Who was afterwards his first wife.

few days has she repeated the same thing. We were talking about Providence. The lady said (God knows from what author she took it) that Providence could be proved more convincingly from the arrangements of nature, than from the course of history; and I maintained the contrary. Providence, I said, like the existence of God, was a matter of faith, not of demonstration; it lay beyond the province of reason, as the "Critique" beautifully shows. But if our aim was to find a support for our transcendental faith, we could not, strictly speaking, rest safely on arguments about the arrangements of nature, which could not do more than strengthen the belief in a supremely wise Cause of the universe, and could not even place this quite above the reach of attack from materialists. We must look to the succession of historical events for a confirmation of this faith. Perhaps it was the desire of confounding the lady-philosopher by a paradox, that incited me to lay down this, in itself, very tenable proposition. However, it was a barricade which, with all her loquacity, she could not get through. But before either she had owned herself vanquished, which she never would have done, or I had abandoned the strife from politeness, behold! there came the master, Reinhold himself, and she was silent. I might have talked on unrestrained, for I knew very well that, to be consistent, Reinhold must have agreed with me. I have been summoned to her house several times since, and on Thursday was even invited to dinner. She has left now. Has Hamburgh changed this woman, or did we see her in Meldorf through coloured glass? It was our frivolity, good nature, vanity, and all our respective peculiarities of thought and feeling, which we discussed till we brought ourselves into a community of sentiment, and one and all got our heads heated about a woman for whom the heart must remain cold, unless it have run full speed from our control, and is seeking the first gate to stop at (for her heart is nothing but a voice, and has long ago evaporated into breath, like camphor in the air). I repeat, it was our own weakness and sentimentality that allowed us to find everything ideal in this woman, as raw expositors do in the

Bible; which is all the more natural in seclusion, in proportion as we have endeavoured to do full justice to what we do not possess ourselves, and the more ambitiously we strive not to be exposed to the imputation of stupidity, from a want of appreciation. We were blind to overweening pretensions, (which certainly indeed did not come up to those of yesterday); lectures, which were meant for the nourishment and satisfaction of her unbounded vanity, we believed to be devoted to our improvement; literally the very same questions have been put to us again upon these lectures, till we were weary of them, and now as mechanically as if the word-machines, then perhaps new, were by this time quite worn smooth with use. We submitted to receive honour from her. However, the delusion is over with me—a delusion that has been dissipated simply by reflection. For she has done me honour now too, and no sort of neglect or jealousy has warped my judgment. The honour that is my due can only be conferred on me by men like Reinhold and Hensler, for they have it in rich abundance to bestow; but not by any presumptuous dispenser of a usurped possession. I will receive roses and myrtles from female hands, but no laurels; I only wish that I may plant them, and then be crowned by three or five men. . . . . .

X.*

KIEL, *29th October*, 1794.

. . . . It is certain that I feel the loss of all much more deeply, now that I have enjoyed these lost blessings again for a short time in such full measure, than I did before, when I lived in complete ignorance of the future, and then too forgot so many things almost entirely in the complete novelty of my position. What I miss, and always shall miss, you know; and I am not sure that it is good for me to dwell upon it. My isolation—not isolation from strangers, that is salutary—but isolation from my own family, from those who are nearest and dearest to me in the world—this is what would still frequently depress my spirits, if I did not

* Written after having returned from Meldorf.

strive with all my might not to feel it. The beginning of next month shall find me diligent; as intent upon banishing troublesome thoughts as upon advancing in knowledge. Knowledge, what is commonly called learning, mere dull memory-work, will never be the aim of my exertions. The one thing needful is, to cultivate one's understanding for one's self, so as to render it capable of production. He who merely crams himself with the conceptions of other men's minds, clothed in forms foreign to his own nature, will never accomplish much. Quiet and independent energetic industry can alone attain to what is true, and bring forth what is really useful. . . . .

XI.

KIEL, 16*th November*, 1794.

. . . . I am now accustomed to my solitude, and do not get gloomy when I am alone the whole evening, and work till eleven o'clock.* . . . . Yesterday evening I was much pleased to hear of the new plan of education in France. "Go thy way, and sin no more." That is all that lies in our power. . . . . It would heartily rejoice me if I could some day conclude a history of all those horrors, with the account of measures through which a great nation might become happy and truly enlightened, and should live to witness the result of these judicious plans. . . . .

Hensler cherishes views with regard to my future career, in which I cannot fully concur. He wants me to be a natural philosopher, and to make the natural history of antiquity the special object of my investigations. This is a good and worthy and beautiful pursuit for those who like it; but from the peculiar direction of my mind and talents, I believe that nature has intended me for a literary man, an historian of ancient and modern times, a statesman, and perhaps a man of the world; although the last, thank God, neither in the proper sense of the word, nor in the horrible one that is usually associated with it. Meanwhile, my

* While it appears from Letter III., that he considered it late when he was not up before six in the morning.

individual taste will certainly carry the day; and, if my name is ever to be spoken of, I shall be known as an historian and political writer, as an antiquarian and philologist. I study the sciences, which Hensler would make my ultimate object, merely as the means of procuring greater richness of ideas, rendering my heart and head clear and bright, or rather subjecting my poor heart, which will go on sentimentalising and blundering, to my head. Meanwhile, I constantly become more and more estranged from the world, in the ordinary sense of the term; but the less I mix myself up with it, the more affectionately do my thoughts turn to you; and I trust that some day, through my love, obedience, and the fruits of my honest endeavours, I may, if not reward you for your love, at least prove that it has not been thrown away. Therefore forgive me when I am prolix, and forget myself over my writing. I acknowledge how much I owe to your care and affection, and I only regret that you were not stricter and more severe with me; for what would have hurt and pained me at the time, would now be very beneficial to me, and I should ere this have attained much that still costs me an effort. Therefore I would warn every one, whose child shows a bad disposition, to hold him in while he is young, for there is not much fear of breaking his spirit. His innate impudence will protect him from this; and I feel, by myself, that our faults cannot be torn up with too much violence in childhood, before they have taken too deep a root. It is not every one who is so deeply in earnest in the effort to overcome his faults as, God knows, I am. For many others, therefore, it is yet more necessary; and it is better for him, who has a proneness to frivolity and other vices, to "suffer in the body that the soul may be saved." . . . .

XII.

KIEL, *23rd November*, 1794.

I will not deny, my dearest parents, that I was distressed and hurt by the undeserved tone of displeasure which seemed to prevail in both your letters. You are dissatisfied with me because I seek no society, or rather because I avoid parties.

. . . . But you will allow that I am at the University, not to lead as pleasant a life as I can, but to turn all my time and powers to account. And believe me, dearest parents, it would be impossible to be as happy in much society as I am in the feeling that my solitude is well employed. When I have completed my studies I will enter the world. Woe be to the fool who enters it before he has knowledge enough to compensate for its emptiness. . . . . My dear parents, do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to be an oddity, and I am not a misanthrope. . . . . If my letter has really the morose tone which you, dearest mother, think you perceived in it, it was certainly quite accidental. It may be that the strict mode of life which I impose upon myself gives a sort of rigidity to my manners and every thing about me, even to the tone of my letters. But, believe me, I am none the worse for it. I must do one of two things; either I must accommodate myself to the manners of our vicious, effeminate, and feeble age, or I must keep my own manners, consequently my own tone and mode of thinking and speaking. In the first case, I may, perhaps, please a great part of my contemporaries, but certainly not the better part, nor myself, nor posterity. In the second, I must indeed offend the partisans of the first, but it will be possible for me to live so as to deserve my own approbation, and so as not to pass away with the great multitude of my nameless contemporaries. . . . .

XIII.

KIEL, 30*th November*, 1794.

. . . . I spent an evening with Behrens lately, and we laid a wager. He asserts that within a year, more than one revolution will break out, and I assert the contrary. On the other hand, I have offered to lay a wager with him, that in four years a monarchical government will be re-established in France.* I find myself constantly confirmed in this opinion as I read the English history, which I do a good

* If Niebuhr had said *five* years he would have gained his wager. Napoleon was created First Consul on the 10th of November, 1799.

deal in my leisure moments. If I had time, I should like to get more facts together, and as it is, I have found in the very rare notices which are inserted in the notes to Algernon Sidney's "Discourses," and seem to be quite unknown in Germany, very striking and extraordinary parallels. Unfortunately I have no time for employments of this kind at present! And yet history grows dearer and dearer to me, so much so that my ardour in reading history interferes with my zeal for philosophy, while no philosophy can blunt my inclination to history. . . . . Salchow came in just as I was writing about him. We took up our usual occupation. I am dictating to him a short outline of the history of the French war. I am astonished at my own memory, for I still remember with great distinctness the merest trifles that have occurred from 1792 onwards.

XIV.

KIEL, *6th December*, 1794.

. . . . This day is the anniversary of Algernon Sidney's death, one hundred and eleven years ago, and hence it is in my eyes a consecrated day, especially as I have just been studying his noble life again. May God preserve me from a death like his, yet even with such a death, the virtue and holiness of his life would not be dearly purchased. And now he is forgotten almost throughout the world, and perhaps there are not fifty persons in all Germany, who have taken the pains to inform themselves accurately about his life and fortunes. Many may know his name, many know him from his brilliant talents, but they formed the least part of his true greatness. . . . .

What I am dictating to Salchow is not a history of the Revolution, but merely a brief outline of the war, and is really a recreation which serves to exercise my memory. This trusty servant has preserved dates for the last two years of which I have rarely thought a second time. Among the many whimsical crotchets which have plagued me from time to time, I once took it into my head that it injured the judgment to strengthen the memory, and therefore resolved

to give up the latter. But nature was kinder to me than I deserved. I retained every thing without effort, and now I am as anxious to strengthen the one as the other. . . . .

My dictating to Salchow is no secret, and as my attempt seems likely to turn out very well, I do not care into whose hands the paper may fall. I do not copy it; what I have once given forth I do not like to see again. It is too insignificant to be worth printing; in manuscript it might be useful to an officer.

Niebuhr's intercourse, however, during his college life at Kiel, was by no means confined to the professors and students of the University, but he was admitted into a circle of the intellectual society of Holstein, which then comprised some of the most highly gifted persons of that day in Germany.

The little city of Eutin, delightfully situated on the wooded shores of an extensive lake, about twenty miles from Kiel, formed a sort of centre to this circle. It had formerly been an imperial bishopric, and was afterwards secularised and transferred to Oldenburg, with which duchy it came into the possession of Denmark but still retained a separate administration, the president of which at this time was Count Frederick Leopold Stolberg. His elder brother Christian—married to a sister of the two Counts Reventlow—lived at no great distance on his estates. The two brothers, belonging to one of the most ancient families in Germany, were both well known as poets and public men, though the younger was much the more distinguished of the two. The elder was a man of noble and pure mind, and sincere religious feeling, and possessed talents of no mean order, but he had not the originality nor the fiery depth

of feeling, which characterised Count F. L. Stolberg. The latter was full of genius, life, and affection, but already disturbed by the consciousness of those deficiencies in his hereditary creed and church, which led, three years later, to his making a profession of Catholicism. The secretary to the government was Nicolovius, afterwards minister of public worship in Prussia, whose acquaintance Niebuhr seems to have made at this time, and to whom several of his letters are addressed. Voss was rector of a gymnasium at Eutin, and the amiable and intellectual philosopher and poet Jacobi, likewise resided there at that time. Near Kiel lived Count Frederick Reventlow, Curator of the University of Kiel, a man of intellect, integrity, and high cultivation ; a conservative in politics, and a strict Lutheran in religion. He had lately returned from his mission as ambassador in London. His wife, a sister of Count Schimmelman, the Danish minister of finance, exercised, by her brilliant powers and unaffected religious fervour, scarcely less influence over the circle of their associates than himself. The professors Hensler and Cramer belonged to this coterie. All its members were conservative in their principles excepting Voss, whose views, indeed, were so little in unison with those of the rest, that they were already beginning to divide him from his friends.

Niebuhr spent his long vacations with his parents, but his shorter ones were generally passed at Eutin, on visits to Voss, Jacobi, or Count F. L. Stolberg. Of these Jacobi had the greatest influence over him. The union in Jacobi, of candour, amiability, high refinement, and calm philosophic thought, with taste and

susceptibility of feeling, particularly attracted him. The predominance of the moral sentiment in both, and their intense reverence for all that was exalted and holy, was a link between them, and Niebuhr's letters show that there were few to whom he could so unreservedly unbosom himself. His friendship with him was only broken by the death of the latter in 1819. Niebuhr also made the acquaintance, about this time, of Schlosser,* the brother-in-law of Goethe, mentioned in his "Dichtung und Wahrheit," and the poet Baggesen,† whose talents he greatly admired, though he regretted his unsettled life and character. During the second year of his college life Niebuhr became acquainted with Count Adam Moltke, then residing at Kiel, who was several years older than himself, but admitted him to as close an intimacy as if they had been on a footing of equality. They soon became bosom friends, and retained their affection for each other through life. Moltke is thus described, as he was a few years later, by the son of an intimate friend of both himself and Niebuhr.

"Count Adam Moltke had lived from about the beginning of the present century at Nütschau, an estate in Holstein, which he had received as a compensation for the loss of the fief formerly held by his family in Zealand. Outwardly gifted with a magnificent manly figure, a noble forehead and flashing eyes, inwardly overflowing with energy, and rich in imagination, the principles of the French Revolution had taken

* Author of several papers on various subjects connected with jurisprudence, and the translator of Aristotle's Politics and Longinus on the Sublime.

† Professor of the Danish language and literature in Kiel. He had considerable celebrity as a poet, both in Danish and German. His best poem in the latter language is, "Parthenäis oder die Alpenreisen."

a powerful hold of his mind, and for years he was among its warmest, and certainly one of its purest adherents. After having visited a great part of Europe, and undergone many a bitter grief, he retired to Nütschau, where he strove—apart from political employments, but full of interest in public events—to endure the iron age in patience, with a strong resignation. He needed but a few hours' sleep, and sought to still his inward restlessness by the earnest and continuous study of history; in particular he made himself acquainted with the development of the Italian Republics of the middle ages in its minutest details. He often endeavoured to give a poetical form to his mental life, or to present an historical picture of the well known political relations of past times, but he was unable to clothe the ideas floating in his mind, in shapes sufficiently clear and distinct, to render them fit to go forth into the external world. Thus it was denied him to take an active part in history either by word or deed; but as in his ardent and stirring youth he had exercised an irresistible influence over every one who came in contact with him, so when a man he brought life and energy into every circle he entered. 'He had reached the perfection of his nature,' wrote Niebuhr, in 1806, of this the dearest friend of his youth; 'he had tamed the lion, the restless spirit within him, and was employing his Oriental fire in the animation of Greek forms.'"

Niebuhr's letters to Moltke, of which the following are some extracts, are all that have been preserved of his correspondence during this epoch.

XV.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.

KIEL, *4th August*, 1795.

I went to your library yesterday to fetch Frisch, for which I thank you in your absence. Remember Hickes, for truly in the sweat of our brow must we learn our mother-tongue, for the jargon which we speak is no longer a language. Our forefathers were better off before the Thirty Years' War. Then there was but one speech for gentle and simple, and that was German. Ours is like our jurisprudence, the Divine-Mosaic-Roman-Lombard-canonical-German-statutory code, as some one calls it. Our language is Greek-Roman-Gallic-German-provincial. That most disastrous of wars, which made our princes absolute sovereigns, the Protestants of Upper Germany Catholics, and those of Lower Germany orthodox—which permitted the Jesuits to flourish, desolated the whole land, robbed the Empire of its independence, and our towns of their power—that lamentable war has ruined our language for ever. And this want of a language adapted at once to literature and popular use, is a curse that rests perpetually and exclusively on our nation.

Let us deliver ourselves from this yoke as far as we can! One man has done so, and the result will be, that this element of his intellectual greatness will cause his songs and orations to live longer than those of all our other German sages. I refer to Voss, whose "Luise" has lately afforded me such unequalled enjoyment, that it were a sin against friendship on my part, if I, knowing the existence of such a masterpiece, did not invite you also to contemplate and admire it. He may be (and will be, perhaps, for after ages) to Germany, what Homer and the most perfect of the Greek poets were to their nation. Did he meet with such a reception as they found among their unrivalled fellow-countrymen—were his idylls publicly recited to the people, and his songs sung in popular assemblies, how much might

such a teacher accomplish! He would effect more that was really good and great than *the only true philosophy*, should that ever be discovered. I should like to prescribe Voss and Lessing, for you and myself, as our exclusive mental aliment. Voss forbids every author but Lessing, whom he deems perfect, except that he wants rhythm; he did not, indeed, name himself as the second, but no doubt he knows what he is, and would despise the false modesty of refusing to confess it on a fitting occasion. Forsake even Klopstock, and measure yourself by the severe standard of these men; such at least is my resolution. Not without reason do I speak thus warmly of "Luise." It has done what a book scarcely ever did before — drawn tears of delight from my eyes. It is a striking example that to move the reader most deeply, the author must be in perfect repose, and the style of his whole work calm and mellowed. We can never sufficiently study and examine this late-born Greek. I, at least with Homer, Sophocles, Æschylus, Pindar, Horace, and him, would willingly resign all the other poets in the world; yet this is too hastily written—I could not relinquish Theocritus and that German-Greek, Gessner. It will seem strange to you, perhaps even ridiculous, that I should pass over Klopstock. It has cost me much to do so, but if strict justice be done, I fear he will not stand before the Greek tribunal. I must except the most finished of his odes, which Alcæus himself need not blush to acknowledge, were they ascribed to him, and also the "Republic of the Learned," a thoroughly German work. Voss's criticism has robbed me of the "Grammar," and I am ashamed of the praise I once bestowed on it. But then, alas, the "Messiah!" This rigid justice is a sacrifice, and as you know how I revere this great creator, or rather resuscitator, of our literature, you will appreciate it as it deserves. I have sat at his feet, and am at least not ungrateful.

If you are frequently kept waiting for an answer when you expect one soon, there shall, at least, be no delay whenever business is concerned. So much for excuses and promises. I wish you health and happiness!

NIEBUHR.

XVI.

MELDORF, *in October*, 1795.

The service you have done me is, as you know, most essential. This book shall occupy not a little of my time this winter, and it gives quite a different insight into our language, usually treated so ignorantly by all our modern grammarians; for who can pronounce what a certain thing ought to be, and what it ought not to be, without having traced it to its origin, and thence derived the laws of its after course? Wolf, in Halle, makes himself indeed somewhat ridiculous by his exaggerated praises of grammatical studies even of the most trivial nature, for he ascribes far too much of the literary disgrace of our modern times to the neglect of such pursuits, but there is too plainly some truth in what he says. But to adduce the ill-effects on their respective languages, of the rules laid down by the Alexandrine, and recently by the Florentine Academies, as an argument against all attempts to give a language fixed grammatical forms, is quite wrong. For these Academies set to work in the wrong way, they took their forms from the writers of their golden age, and in every age when much has been written, and by men of talent, the language has swerved from its original use. But it is only from its primitive style that rules can be drawn why a man must express himself thus, and no otherwise, if he will speak Greek or German. No instance from the most intellectual and fertile author of the most brilliant period can justify, or even excuse, his successor for the use of an expression which offends against those fundamental laws. For the former had no more liberty than I have. The case is different with secondary meanings and shades of meanings, which depend more on the spirit of the age. I am not bound to remain absolutely faithful to the sense which the most ancient writers may have affixed to a word; if the sense ascribed to it by the moderns is more suitable, I may make use of it, and perhaps it is even the duty of an author to obey custom

in such a case, in order to make himself intelligible. But it would certainly be advisable for our philosophers to examine into the primitive meaning of the words which they employ; they would not then impose on them so much more than they can bear, and it might lead them to some conclusions which would render many an acute dissertation unnecessary. Hence I most earnestly wish to see such an examination undertaken, and to see it employed as the foundation, at least in part, of the history of philosophy. It has long been my conviction that such an investigation must begin from the beginning, and gradually descend to our own times, if it is to get behind the scenes of the history of systems and opinions, and I was not a little pleased to find from Jacobi, when he was in Kiel, that he quite agrees with me. . . . . Before all things I must say a little more about Jacobi. He seems to me to gain indescribably by personal acquaintance, and to display in all his manners, and his whole being, a noble nature, which his later writings do not show in its simplicity.

To me this shows how a man of great endowments may fall into thoroughly bad mannerism, and if this once happens, there is a danger of his sinking into it ever deeper. But as to the man himself, his kindness and gentleness, his singular urbanity, his eloquence, the grace of his manners, and the rich unbroken flow of his discourse, I find that none of his many admirers have praised him too highly; on the contrary, all these qualities singly and in combination surpassed far and far every expectation I had previously formed. You know, or may guess from a conversation we had not long before your journey, that my opinion of him had been somewhat lowered by the judgment of men whom I respected. I silently asked his forgiveness for it as soon as I saw him, and still more when I knew him better, for I had this good fortune, and was able to ask his opinion on many subjects. Rejoice! He says Fichte is among the first of men and philosophers, and is on the right road, &c. . . .

While Niebuhr was on a visit to Eutin in January,

1796, Dr. Hensler received a commission from the Danish minister of finance, Count Schimmelman, to ask the young Niebuhr if he were willing to accept the post of private secretary to him for a few years. Some of Niebuhr's productions had excited Schimmelman's interest, and he had also frequently heard of him as a young man of very eminent talent from his brother-in-law Count Reventlow, and the Stolbergs. Dr. Hensler, who was on the point of setting out for Eutin, took Count Schimmelman's letter with him, and communicated it to Niebuhr. Both he and Hensler felt some hesitation at the interruption it would cause to his studies; still they both perceived the great advantages of such a connection, not only as regarded his future position, but also his improvement in practical knowledge.

Hensler knew also, that although only nineteen years of age, he was sufficiently well grounded in knowledge, and ripe enough in understanding and character, to perform the duties that would devolve upon him to Schimmelman's satisfaction, and to enter on the great world without peril to his industry and morality. Stolberg and Jacobi strongly urged his acceptance of the offer. Niebuhr referred the decision unconditionally to his father. The elder Niebuhr, who could conceive of no pleasure so great as that of visiting foreign countries, had originally wished that his son should follow in his steps, and carry out the enterprises which he had himself contemplated. He became afterwards convinced that his son's delicacy of health would prove an insuperable obstacle to such plans, but still

wished him to travel within the limits of the civilised world; and when he hoped to see him filling some diplomatic office, it is hard to say, whether he most desired it for its own sake as an honourable post in the service of the state, or because it would involve a residence abroad. For the present, he advised him to accept Count Schimmelman's offer, but only in the first instance for a year, or a year and a half, so that he might afterwards be at liberty to pursue his studies abroad.

The offer was therefore accepted, and Niebuhr, who had to enter on his post at Easter, left Kiel early in the spring, in order that he might spend some weeks first with his parents. Moltke accompanied him to Meldorf. While there, he paid a visit to Dr. Behrens, the prefect of North Dithmarsh, and the father of his friend Madame Hensler. At the house of the latter he had already been introduced, as we have seen, to her younger sister. He had also known Dr. Behrens for some time, and had a high esteem for him and his wife, but his usual shyness in the society of women had prevented his ever entering into conversation with the daughters. Now, however, he had a common topic of interest in speaking of Madame Hensler, and he soon became deeply impressed with the nobleness and worth of Amelia Behrens, though he did not express his feeling, and indeed scarcely ventured to encourage the idea that she would ever return his attachment.

CHAPTER III.

NIEBUHR'S FIRST RESIDENCE IN COPENHAGEN. 1796—1798.

COUNT SCHIMMELMAN was the son of a man who had made an immense fortune by contracting for the army, and was afterwards ennobled and made a Count. This second Count was for thirty years minister of finance and commerce in Denmark, which under his administration enjoyed a high degree of prosperity up to the time of the ruinous war with England at the beginning of this century. The termination of the slave trade and the emancipation of the negroes in the colonies, were owing to him, (though he was one of the largest landed proprietors in the West Indies,) and he was also the author of many other measures for the amelioration of their moral and physical condition. Affairs of state did not however engross his whole attention; he took a warm interest in science and art, and willingly extended help and encouragement to those engaged in their pursuit. Yet this extraordinary man was small almost to insignificance in person, of a nervous and sensitive temperament, and so retiring and humble in his manners that a stranger would have fancied him quite oppressed with diffidence. His house was the resort of

all who were distinguished for talents or cultivation, whether foreigners or residents in the city. Copenhagen itself was perhaps at that time in its highest prosperity; its trade was extensive and flourishing; the government was greatly respected both at home and abroad. Commerce was carried on with great activity; travellers from all regions, and natives of every part of the globe, were to be seen there.

On his arrival in Copenhagen, Niebuhr was received by Count Schimmelman with a friendliness which at once inspired him with a very agreeable idea of his new position. His first impressions were not contradicted by his further experience. In a short time he had so won the esteem and confidence of Count Schimmelman, and discharged the duties entrusted to him so completely to his satisfaction, that the Count had hardly any secrets from him, and used to converse with him openly and familiarly on the weightiest matters of state. Others also sought his society, not only because he was a favourite with Schimmelman, but for the sake of the more than ordinary life and interest which his intellect and vivacity imparted to general conversation. His position in Schimmelman's house, and the consideration which his father enjoyed, gave him access to the houses of the highest families and the most distinguished officers of state and scholars in Copenhagen, as well as those of the principal merchants.

At first, Niebuhr was highly delighted with this new world, but he soon found that society took up too much of his time, and interfered with the calmness as well as the leisure requisite for study during the hours that

Schimmelman did not require his services. The consciousness that he was thus wasting his time, and the self-dissatisfaction that ensued, affected his health and spirits, but he now found it difficult to draw back. This was particularly the case with regard to the parties at Schimmelman's house. The Countess, who had delicate health, and on this account usually excused herself from attendance at court, and visits out of her own house, was nevertheless extremely fond of society, and apt to require rather too much attention from her acquaintance. She invited Niebuhr to join in her parties, which he at first did very willingly, but when, feeling the necessity of economising his time for better objects, he gradually withdrew, it produced an unpleasant state of feeling between him and the Countess. This lasted so long as he remained in the house, and rendered his position there often extremely uncomfortable, but after he had left it, the offence was forgotten, and he continued to see her on the footing of an intimate friend.

In the month of August, however, the Prime Minister Count P. A. Bernstorff, offered him the post of supernumerary secretary at the Royal Library, with no salary in the first instance, but with permission to travel abroad after a time. He at once accepted this offer, but in compliance with Count Schimmelman's request, remained in his service till the Count could find a suitable person to take his place. As Schimmelman was not able to do this for some time, Niebuhr continued to act as his private secretary till May or June, 1797.

Niebuhr had accepted the post at the library, in order to extricate himself from the whirlpool of society into which he had been drawn, and to have the power of labouring with less hindrance in those fields of science to which his taste still chiefly inclined. He partially succeeded in this attempt, but not to the extent he had hoped. His talents for public business were already so conspicuous, that Schimmelman often entrusted commissions to him, which he always willingly undertook; and he was also disturbed in his pursuits by attractive offers from other quarters. For instance, he writes to Mrs. Hensler as early as August, 1796, "I have received from France, the offer of a post of literary activity, which would have involved an immediate journey to Rome. How much there was against the thing you will see yourself. I informed Schimmelman of it, who saw what attractions it held out to me, but at the same time was not blind to its disadvantages." On Mrs. Hensler's expressing her fears about plans of this nature in such perilous times, he replies in September, "It appears to me that you see more cause for alarm than really exists. At any rate, I decided long ago not to venture on this seductive step. How indeed could I bear to live so far from all who are dear to me—among a nation to whom in general I have an aversion? A wish was afterwards expressed to see me in the suite of the next Danish embassy to Paris, without any suggestion of the kind on my part.* You know that this accords with similar wishes of my father's. For

* Probably by Grouvello, who was at this time the French minister in Copenhagen, and who tried much to attach Niebuhr to himself.

the present, however, I have declined the proposal. You know that I am appointed secretary at the Library. This is exactly what I could have wished; it releases me from obligations which had been imposed upon me over and above my personal duties to Schimmelman,—from waste of time,—from all bustle and distraction,—gives me the hope of living with Conrad Hensler this winter, and of going abroad next year to prosecute my studies with all earnestness. How much I mean to profit by this journey, and feel that I need to profit by it, I have already told your father Dr. Hensler."

Niebuhr remained therefore during the winter of 1796-97, at Count Schimmelman's, in his former position. In the course of this winter he frequently saw Baggesen, with whose intellect and geniality he had been already charmed when in Holstein, but whose instability of character both in thought and action he always deplored.

In the spring he left Count Schimmelman's, and hired apartments in the city, but remained on his former terms of friendship and intimacy with the Count. As a proof of the esteem in which he was held by him, it may be mentioned that in August, 1797, Schimmelman offered him the situation of Consul-general in Paris during the war. His official duties in this post would probably have led him to visit the southern provinces of France, and a portion of Spain. Before Niebuhr had fully decided whether to accept it or not, the place was applied for by a man whose years and length of service entitled him to consideration. The greater quiet and freedom from interruption in his new

situation was very beneficial to Niebuhr. In August, 1797, he paid a visit to his friends in Holstein. He first went to Kiel, where he spent a fortnight, and met Amelia Behrens almost daily at the house of Dr. Hensler. The impression which she had made on him a year before was renewed and deepened. His secret wishes could not escape the eye of Madame Hensler. She spoke openly to him on the subject before he left for Meldorf, begged that while there he would seriously examine his feelings and his position, consult his parents, and regulate his conduct towards her sister accordingly. The following letter he wrote to her in reply:—

XVII.

MELDORF, *20th August*, 1797.

Yesterday was the fourth evening since our conversation —a conversation which will remain eternally imprinted on my memory. Since then, I have not only visited a new place, which till now has always been enough to run away with my imagination, but have also re-visited those spots, which, from the number and vividness of my associations with them, were wont to banish for a time all other thoughts. I have seen my parents and sister, my acquaintances, and our friends, the Voss's,—but the remembrance of those last hours is still fresh in my heart, as at the first moment of our parting.

I never grieved more at having reached the end of a happy time, and yet never felt so full of joy and hope as in these last few days. You and your friends made me very happy while I was with you. I told you my sorrows, and you comforted me; I rejoiced with the purest joy in the affection and virtue of my beloved friends; they were all crowded together in Kiel and knew and loved each other well. You brought me nearer to those, who, though the dearest on earth to you, were as yet almost strangers to me. I felt that my friends

loved me, and I had no thought beyond the present; at last, dear friend, you did more than this; you had guessed my wishes, and seen that I dared not express them; you gave words to my timorous thoughts, and in so doing suffered me to cherish them. What a change for one who had before stood alone, and looked on solitude as his doom!

At every moment that I have had to myself for reflection, I have pondered on the idea, and asked myself whether the reality would be as happy as the prospect was entrancing. I found the question very simple, and the answer was, "Were I to obtain the blessing of which I am not yet worthy, I should have more than I ever ventured to desire, and my happiness could only be disturbed by my own fault!" It is not necessary to know your Amelia long. Can one help believing in her at first sight? Why should I repeat what you know already, that her presence gave me such unspeakable, heartfelt delight! The first speaking glance of her clear beautiful eyes, her richly-cultivated mind, that reveals itself so simply and unassumingly, almost timidly; her purity, her tenderness, shine out in all her words and motions, and would be evident to one less susceptible than I am. I see no shadow, not even a cloud, to dim this sunshine, when I think only of myself.

Your objection that Amelia is nearly three years older than I, and that even equality of age is in general undesirable, is I think inapplicable in my case;—and then I have two remarks to make as regards myself:—First, that two years of strenuous endeavour, during which the possibility of the new position you have pointed out to me, would fill my mind with pictures of a happy future, would resemble hot, sunny, fertilising days, in which the fruit which has long hung green and hard upon the tree, rapidly receives colour, perfume, and ripeness; without metaphor, that these two years would make me worthier of Amelia. Secondly, that the advice of a wiser friend has ever been invaluable to me, because I am apt to neglect the small duties of daily life; this you see in our friendship, and how much more with such a being if she were wholly mine! But I dare not think too

constantly about it, for the more vividly I picture to myself such unclouded happiness, the more painful becomes the doubt whether Amelia will ever consent to unite herself to me. Just what makes me see that in a connection with her I should gain a sure guide, and many wounds of my heart would be gently healed—namely, her decidedly superior maturity of character—must prevent her from thinking of me. We all strive after something above us, to support and elevate us, and will she alone be unable to estimate her own worth in comparison with others'?

I wait with impatient desire for your next letter. I wonder whether you have as much hope as when we parted, or whether you will advise me to suppress the beautiful thought before it grows into an unconquerable longing.

After staying three weeks with his parents, he returned to Kiel. The following letter to Moltke shows with what result :—

XVIII.

KIEL, *October*, 1797.

Dora and I send you and your wife this messenger, because we cannot bear to wait several days before writing to you, especially as our letter would be a long time on the road; so you will receive this before another, that Dora wrote to you two days ago, which announced as close at hand what has now really taken place. I am in far too great an agitation to say much. Each of you take one of our letters; Dora's will tell you the most. Yesterday evening, at Dora's house, Amelia decided in my favour. Her heart had already decided. Love can distinguish between truth and pretence. She assumed no girlish affectation when Dora gave words to feelings that had before scarcely expressed themselves, and joined our hands. This pure simplicity, this Roman decision, in a gentle heart, made my happiness perfect, and made it possible. A long time of trial, full of doubt and uncertainty—servitude to win a love, that cannot be sustained by gallantry and pretty flatteries, but must take root in the heart—would either have

frightened me away, or harassed me to death; and yet one scarcely sees anything else, except where the suitability of the connection is calculated, and everything negotiated by the papa and mamma on each side. I long considered this servitude as the only means of becoming intimately acquainted with a girl, for the gulf, which custom and our folly have placed between young men and women, seemed to me impassable. And so it would have been to me, had not Dora's heart and Dora's wisdom allowed me to follow my nature completely. I know that I have earnestly endeavoured not to deceive Milly. In our conversations when we met, I spoke to her from my inmost heart, and took pains to discover to her, what, if concealed, might have deceived her, and made her very unhappy hereafter; for I thought myself bound not to deny what still clings to me from former evil times as a stain to be washed out; but I hope to God, that happiness, and the power of love, this new unknown force, and above all, the contemplation of the proud joy in her angelic heart, and an openness that will rather gain than lose through absence, will purify me before we can be united,—for absence is before us. The letter Dora wrote to you the day before yesterday will have told you all about it. It is inevitable, and you will not misunderstand me when I tell you, that I do not now view it with dread. O who could feel themselves separated, when in spirit and in love they are so inseparable! I embrace every effort, every toil, every sacrifice, for all will render me worthier of my Milly. It is true we have a long future before us, but who knows how it may be shortened? And if I, who have not your equability, cannot promise Milly your evenness of temper, your constant warmth, I can promise her inviolable truth, and ever-growing, exclusive love. And woe to him who does not repose with full confidence upon the truth of a pure-hearted maiden! I shall assuredly know neither suspicion nor jealousy. And she who equally possesses both our hearts, our Dora, who can now live wholly for us, and is through us brought back to the world, will unite us by the rarest bond. Thank you, dearest of friends, as much as it is possible to thank, for the

kind solicitude that you shared with Dora. My heart was sealed up, and my courage gone. Many a pretty face, and here and there a bright creature, had given me a passing pleasure, but only once had the thought of a connection risen vividly before my mind; and when the event made me angry with the maiden and despise myself, yet consider myself happy that the delusion was over, my heart seemed quite dead. I believed no longer in that energetic feeling which irresistibly fixes our destiny.

. . . . Milly has a Roman character, and this was always my ideal of a citizen's wife; pride, intellect, the most retiring modesty, unbounded love, constancy, and gentleness. In history we only meet with such women among the Roman matrons,—the Calpurnias, Portias, Arrias. Soft, weak, tender girlishness, would neither have elevated nor strengthened my character. I must stop. This is too confused, and I must go and take these pages to Dora, and then go to Milly and her mother, who willingly consents. Farewell.

The following is an extract from a letter of Conrad Hensler's to Niebuhr, on this occasion :—

"Dearest Niebuhr, doubly and trebly do I wish you joy. I could form no slight expectation of *your choice*, but it is far exceeded. So much intelligence and affection, such purity of mind and clearness of judgment, such depth of feeling, such overflowing affections,—such as your Amelia is, so ought she to be who is to be your companion for life. How beautiful is her seriousness,—even her reserve! She does well to maintain her reserve, for if she breaks through it, her feelings overflow. So self-relying, so unexacting, and yet such delicate and tender feelings, such fullness of affection! With what sweet open cordiality she greeted me —she who formerly was so reserved and distant; it was so visible what a claim it gave me upon her to be your friend. And when I saw her again, when she was cheerful, even merry (your letter had arrived), how beautiful was the smile on her countenance!"

After Niebuhr's return to Copenhagen, he continued to fulfil his duties as librarian during the winters of 1797-98, and also diligently carried on his own studies in private. As his wishes still inclined towards a professorship in Kiel, where he hoped to lead the quiet and studious life most suited to his disposition, he directed his reading at this time principally to philological and historical subjects.

His letters to his betrothed show that, though no longer suffering from unsatisfied aspirations of the heart, his over-active intellect occasioned him many hours of depression and lassitude. Unconscious of the disproportion between his mental and physical powers, he exerted the former without regard to the latter; and when experiencing the natural consequences of such a course in the loss of mental tone, he reproached himself bitterly for indolence and want of proper discipline of the mind. He found a still stronger source of dissatisfaction with himself, in the belief, that from the inadequacy of his education in childhood, and his too early introduction into the distractions of the great world, his mind had received a wrong direction; that the creative faculty which requires self-concentration had been lost, and but poorly replaced by the power of acquiring and elaborating the ideas of others. He seems to have thought that his mind, which might have been a lamp, had become a mirror.

The following extracts from his letters will serve to illustrate this period of his life :—

XIX.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.

Written in April, 1796, at COPENHAGEN.

It is rather through accident than fault of mine, dear friend of my heart, that you have had no letter yet worthy of the name. Yours of the 25th of March did not reach me till the 8th of April . . . . . I cannot imagine who has given himself the trouble to interrupt our correspondence, for an inexplicable delay has taken place somewhere. As long as no letter had arrived from you, I hesitated whether to write or not, and the following reasons decided me to wait. . . . I wanted you to know all about my situation here. At first it promised wonders. I was very happy, though not so much so as with you at Kiel. I was made much of, my work was easy, and I got on well with it. I was treated like a friend, and found myself in a family, whose head, at least, commands my deepest reverence. Then the variety of people whom we see here, afforded me a fund of entertainment, though I could not help despising most of them. One sees queer puppets here. To write to you then would have been like writing in a fit of intoxication or a dream. The intoxication has evaporated, and the dream is fled. What I say to you now, is what you will always hear from me: I am quite convinced that, as matters stand, I could not have had a happier lot than that which has fallen to me. Not a *happier*, for whether a different turn of events,—the obligation and the leisure to devote myself to hard study,—might not have been more *wholesome* for me, is another question. Such a vocation would at least have conduced much more to my peace of mind. That this is now often much disturbed by the nature of my position, that I have a thousand temptations to yield to a frivolous vanity,—a detestable desire to please; that there are numberless amusements to entice me; that the tone universally prevalent among the people with whom I have to do, allures and tempts me to ease and indolence, you will readily conceive, and will forgive your friend if he should now and then go astray. Yet you will understand,

and indeed you told me long ago, that good-fortune had done everything possible for me in this situation. A pleasant life, Schimmelman as a friend and instructor, freedom from all pecuniary cares during my youth, the best opportunities of being initiated into statesmanship with Schimmelman, of advancing in scholarship, by means of the Library here; it is my own fault if such advantages remain unimproved. But they are like precious gold-mines, that rarely lie on the surface of the earth, and require much toil to bring their treasures to light. I did not believe at first that it would be so difficult to profit as I ought by these gifts of fortune. This was my dream, the illusion of my intoxication. I overlooked the hindrances. It is not Schimmelman, nor the work he gives me to do, that takes up my time and worries and harasses me. I really do not regret being obliged to stay at home every evening from eight till eleven, because of the society I meet there. But what does vex me now (at first it was neither so bad in itself nor so noticeable) is that our reading is so often interrupted, so unconnected, that such precious time is thus wasted. Even the heartfelt delight I have in Schimmelman, and all that he says, can scarcely make me forget it. I often laugh at the Countess's plans and speeches, especially her philosophical discourses; seldom let them provoke me; never talk with her on philosophy. What annoy me most are our parties, especially the stiff, lifeless, horribly aristocratic, state assemblies, though these do not come very often. Perhaps I shall manage to get excused from them altogether. All the time they consume is utterly wasted. I think you can hardly imagine how I love that noble Schimmelman. For you do not know him but by daily intercourse, by living with him from morning to night as I have done for this month past; from morning, when we work together, to night, when we read together. His integrity, his cheerfulness, his really great intellect, his freedom from prejudice, his consistency—ought I not to esteem myself most happy in having all this daily before my eyes as a model of excellence? One thing that I particularly like in him is his habit of acting without much

talk. The only thing that I should wish to see altered in him is that he should be more careful of his time. He has a great quantity of work, it is true, but he does not know how to economise the time that is so invaluable. Hence also, business gets into disorder, and he feels more overburdened than he really is. I have become acquainted with Grouvelle, and have the freest access to him. He speaks of you with the interest of a friend, and the admiration of an upright and enlightened man. How we made acquaintance with each other, and got so intimate the first day, that he did not even wait for a request on my part to open his house to me, I must reserve till my next letter, which you shall have a week after this, if God permit. If possible write to me.

XX.

COPENHAGEN, 23*rd April*, 1796.

I have just found from a letter of Hensler's—and it has given me a painful surprise—that your wedding took place on Wednesday,—therefore without your having let me know one word about it. This breach of promise on your part has wounded me deeply and painfully, so that I hardly know whether to be more grieved or angry. I not only, when on my journey, stole time from sleep to write to you; I wrote to you also on the first morning that I spent here, and when, after a three weeks' delay, I received a short answer, I sent you in return a letter which was at least much longer, and, however much it might be wanting in arrangement, elegance of style, or profound thoughts, certainly expressed the warmest friendship. And you have not even time for two lines to enable me to celebrate your festival! You chose an earlier day than you told me—you made it impossible for me even to guess that it was to take place so soon. You always said that you would let me know when your marriage-day was fixed. You told me so many times. How am I to explain this, Moltke? For amid the joy that your happiness really gives me, I still feel the sting of deeply-wounded friendship. Have I displeased you? Have I offended you

by act or omission? Truly I am conscious of nothing, and if anything of the kind had happened would willingly wash it out with tears, or my blood. Do you blame me? Then why now, more than at any other time? Once you loved me; did you not allow me to lay open my faults before you, when I would not suffer you to think better of me than I deserved? What has opened your eyes so suddenly, and why would you not open them before? I know in my conscience that I never wished to deceive you. I love you deeply, with all the strength of my heart, with a love that will stand all trials, and will never conceal our friendship, even in the midst of your bitterest enemies. This I have already shown here, but not all who call themselves friends do the same. In spite of my impatient desire for letters from you, in spite of our wish and resolution to hear often of each other's welfare, in spite of your reproaches when you thought *me* careless in writing, I am left in ignorance of the most important day of your life, and even now know nothing of it, but from others! I thought I perceived a visible coolness in the only letter you sent me here. O Moltke, I love you; I am jealous and eager for your love. Can any one have stolen it from me? Explain yourself and let us not become cool or mistrustful. You would despise me if I were to permit such an injury to pass unresented; but I should despair of all friendship if you could mistake the spirit of this letter. No, you are no hypocrite; you never dissembled. At our last parting, your heart was certainly mine, for you said so. I entreat you, make all clear between us. I love few as I do you, but if it must be,—if I must lose you, an open, bleeding wound were better than a hidden one, than a disease of the soul which would at last fill the whole heart with bitterness, and the mind with night. Am I unjust to you? No, for I accuse you of nothing. Fears, anxiety, mortification, are not accusations, but you must answer me as quickly as possible,—within three days at the most after receiving this letter, or I shall hold all my fears for truths. Through your silence you have not received the "Nedham," the token of my joy at your union.

Did you wish not to have it? I am so vexed and unhappy that it is impossible for me to speak a single word of joy. Do not be offended at my warmth. Only set my mind at peace, and I will write to you immediately; but first of all, I pray for God's blessing on you and your wife, and give my love to her, who has certainly no part in your fault.

NIEBUHR.

XXI.

9th December, 1796.

. . . . What do you say to the *moral* tone of our poets? Our philosophers and scholars have long since distinguished themselves in that respect. But Schiller's Almanack for this year!!! It is a comfort to me to be able to share my exasperation at it with Baggesen; for all the rest of the "literati" here are unanimous in its praise. The Germans admire its wit and raciness, the Danes find so much "smag" in it, and such "deylige" verses.* The lady at our house is of the same opinion, and is never weary of extolling it, though, perhaps, she does so chiefly to provoke Baggesen and me. Do you know Falk's Satires? the Prayers in the last Göttingen Musen-Almanac,† and another in the Deutschen Merkur?‡ If you have read them, did you not rejoice in the hope of a German Juvenal? And has not your pleasure been converted into indignation by the scurrility and the hackneyed witticisms of his "Pocket Book"? It is time to attack this evil very seriously. I write to you about it, because I could fain do it myself. Do you in Holstein read as little as we do here? It seems as if the literature of Germany were visibly on the decline. Schiller and Goethe are worse than dead. Wieland's Agathodæmon is insufferable. The new generation is dwarfish. Is Voss to stand alone? Even Klopstock has by no means distinguished himself in his last production. O confess it, Moltke; the bloom of our literature is over, and, besides the usual course

* Smag, taste; deylige, charming.

† Published by the celebrated Poets' Club [Dichter Verein] at Göttingen, numbering among its members Voss, the Stolbergs, Bürger, Holty, Müller, &c. Boje was its editor for some time, afterwards Bürger.

‡ Edited by Wieland.

of nature which has proved itself the same in all nations, it is the French revolution, our infamous policy, and shameful undervaluing of our own people, the want of cultivation among them resulting from this general indifference, and the desecration and shocking abuse of philosophy, that have brought us to this wretched pass. Innocence and light-heartedness have vanished. I must break off, dissatisfied with what I have written. I have been on the point of tearing up my letter, but I will venture to send you the stuff, for I have a presentiment that our correspondence may suffer a long interruption, and I really feel as if I must write to you. I wanted to add:—and we can only make satires to mock our own degradation, or a history that would have the effect of a satire. This afternoon Kirstein, who much admired the Almanac, has had the candour to send me the masterly review of it in the Nürnberger Zeitung. Give yourself the pleasure of reading the avenging article. I shall copy that, and not write another word against the gentlemen. Baggesen entreats your wife for an answer. I have understood, dear Moltke, how happy you are going to be! I rejoice with you in your happiness, and in the thought of what an excellent father you will make. Dear friend, we shall have but a short time together next summer, but I should like to have a few days alone with you. I enjoy the very thought of it. I shall at least enjoy them by anticipation. We shall hardly go to Italy together now. Probably you will not even visit Switzerland? . . . .

XXII.

EXTRACT FROM AN UNFINISHED LETTER TO HIS PARENTS, PROBABLY NEVER SENT.

COPENHAGEN, *5th March*, 1797.

. . . . You will not be sorry to hear, my dear parents, were it only as a good testimonial of your son, that notwithstanding the short time which I am able to devote to Persian, my progress is very considerable; that in ordinary authors I can already understand the sense of whole periods, and have only to contend with single words, for which the Dictionary

gives several meanings, among which the sense must decide. It will please you too that Ludolf is extremely well satisfied with me, and even finds his expectations exceeded, so that, with the help of Arabic, he now thinks it possible for his pupil to acquire such a close acquaintance with the Persian, as at first he always represented as quite unattainable. But you will be still more glad to hear that Ludolf shows himself more and more a warm and sincere friend, as he perceives the success of his undertaking, and that he removes, by a thousand little marks of his good will, all the scruples which I might otherwise feel at such an apparently unnatural connection as that between a man of his standing, and a young scholar as yet undistinguished. He not only takes a sincere pleasure in forming a connoisseur and student of his favourite language, it gives him delight even to have some one with whom he can converse about his general reading (for though not ignorant of European literature, he is not well versed in it,) and still more, to be able to describe with enthusiasm, yet without fearing to make himself ridiculous, his youthful years in Constantinople, which place he much prefers to Europe.

But I shall only allow myself to fancy that all this may give you half as much pleasure, my dearest parents, as you have given me in consenting to my plan of going to England next year. The necessity of being burdensome to you is certainly more unpleasant to me than to you; but your ready consent, and the conviction that so it is best, set my conscience at ease about the matter. I shall, therefore, next summer, (if a devastating revolution has not broken out in England first) read and make extracts from the seven or eight folio volumes of Mirchond, in the Radcliffe library at Oxford, read as much as possible of the more or less important Persian classics which are preserved there in great number, and write notices of them which may lay the foundation of a *Bibliotheca Persica*. As it is impossible, between now and then, to gain more than a mere school-boy knowledge of Arabic, and as it is besides by no means advisable to try to embrace everything, I shall devote all my attention there to the Persians. . . . .

It is a great pity that you, my dearest parents, will always persist in fancying that the praises I bestow on Persian literature proceed from partiality only, and are not deserved. If I could but translate something for you, or lay before you English translations! Hafiz has been compared to Anacreon, and it has been considered a great compliment to him; but the pseudo-Anacreon, who is commonly read for the genuine one, and even the few remains we have of the real poet, are not to be compared with some of the best odes of the poet of Schiras, selected in the Asiatic Miscellany. In general, the Persians stand far behind the Greeks. Firdusi has natural disadvantages from the immense length of his poem (of 60,000 distichs at least, four times as long as both the poems of Homer) and from the circumstance that he wrote in rhymed, decasyllabic iambics, which we must take into the account if we compare him with Homer. But is it not extraordinary enough that it is possible to compare him with such a poet even if he loses by it? The excessive grammatical freedom of the Persian language, and its corruption with Arabic, are very injurious to it; still no language is so sweet and fascinating.

I will now tell you of a proposal which will not be indifferent to you, and I hope not disagreeable.

Since the war, which has ruined the commerce of England and Holland in the Levant, there is an opening for Denmark to carry on a trade there, particularly from the port of Altona; and it is hoped that the peace, or rather the treaty of subjection to France, will not injure these prospects. For this object, consulates are in course of establishment in all quarters of the Levant; and as a consul is to be appointed at Constantinople as well, with a liberal salary moreover, Schimmelman has proposed to me to fill this office, after a time, for a few years, in which he has perhaps been chiefly actuated by Ludolf's earnest assurances that the school of the East is in that city. On my return the desired professorship would certainly be given me.

You see, my dear parents, that I lay this project openly and honestly before you, and leave it to my dear father to

discern for himself, and communicate to you in particular, dearest mother, the great advantages it presents. Without taking Ludolf's assurances that people there are much happier and better than in Europe for much more than the expression of a warm and tender heart, and well knowing that just what must make that place so peculiarly dear to him, parents and home, is an objection to every one else; yet I must put it to you, whether, for a young man who is fond of antiquity and has made it his study, a life of some years in Greece, (through which my way would lead me, after I had spent a few months in Portici, which I could examine more in detail on my return,) would not be the most desirable thing imaginable? Whether Constantinople, in whose great library are preserved all the extant works of value in the Persian language, and which would afford me living practice in writing, speaking, and intercourse with the natives, would not be much more interesting than, for example, a European capital? And whether it would not be very advantageous for a young man (and this is no slight consideration) who has had the misfortune to be known too early, and has thereby become more inconsistent, more showy, and less solid than he ought to be, to find such a retreat, where he might acquire greater serenity and a more complete cultivation of mind? What outward things society, intercourse, civilisation, and the like can give, I have, to a considerable extent, enjoyed, and am not wholly unthankful for it; but my inward cultivation, during many periods of my life, has been unhappily only too much neglected.

I am, however, particularly glad that it is not to be for long, but only for a few years. Schimmelman cannot be at a loss for a consul there, and so we may reckon upon it with certainty, that no forced prolongation of my stay can arise from this source, which would otherwise, I think, be the greatest objection to the plan. It is true letters take a month in going from here, or from Holstein by way of Vienna, before they reach their destination; and it would be still more impossible to wait for answers there than it is between Copenhagen and Meldorf. But if it is true that we

have no advantages without corresponding disadvantages, and that we always must submit to this condition, we ought not, I think, to condemn such a plan on account of this circumstance, as, on account of the quieter life I should lead there, I should certainly be able to write, in comparison, more to you, and more interestingly than I do here. So tell me, dearest parents, what you think about it.

XXIII.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

COPENHAGEN, *8th July*, 1797.

. . . . Schimmelman had a favourite idea lately, which he was extremely anxious to carry into execution. He read me an excellent paper that he had written upon the subject. He wished, namely, to make known the actions of the Government in the most complete and authentic manner. For this purpose he wanted to set up an official journal, uniting correctness with a high moral tone, and announcing the measures proposed by the Government, their adoption as laws, all important acts of the executive, particularly all the appointments to offices, perhaps the names of all the candidates, giving at all events a trustworthy account of the one chosen, and of all leading questions of the day, &c. Such a paper, circulated gratis through the whole country, could hardly fail of producing the effect that Schimmelman hoped and intended, of bringing more life into the relation of the subject to the Government. . . . . You may see by this how little Schimmelman keeps to the beaten track.

I spent a delightful evening with him yesterday, and staid very late. We could not get away from each other. It was a most lovely summer day; the soft air—the beauty of the sea-shore (and it was the first time this year that I had gone that way)—the sense of having performed a task really worth doing, and of use to Schimmelman, to whom I was bringing it—a serene and happy mood that has hardly been interrupted since our last parting—a strong attraction towards Schimmelman himself — all this happy combination of

circumstances completely took possession of me, and put me into the brightest state of mind. I could feel sure too that I gave pleasure to my noble-minded friend.

XXIV.

MELDORF, *24th August*, 1797.

At last I am able to announce to you the decision of my political fate.* . . . .

In order fully to understand, and to give lectures upon ancient literature, and ancient history, which forms a part of it, it is, in my opinion, absolutely necessary that I should have read through all the ancient writings still extant, at least once, with the closest attention—the more important works many times — and acquired a living and familiar acquaintance with each period. There may possibly be some exceptions to this rule in the case of special sciences, which must for ever remain a mystery to the uninitiated. This undertaking was carried out by Milton long ago. There would scarcely be found many to do it now, but it seems to me that it is what I undoubtedly ought to attempt.

A profound and practical acquaintance with the grammar of the two classical languages must be obtained, partly by means of the various treatises on that subject, and partly from the literature of the languages themselves. A systematic philosophy, as the groundwork of all settled convictions, and all accurate thought; what is perhaps still more important, method in thinking, writing, and studying; added to these, various exercises in the art of composition, and a thorough command of our mother tongue, are indispensable requisites for any one who steps forth before the public, and seeks to obtain a high standing. It is no more than a man demands of himself.

These then are the preliminary tasks that I should have to execute, before I could accept a professorship in Kiel without a blush, and discharge its duties without disgracing or overworking myself. As one cannot do every thing, and, least of all, prolong one's preparations *ad infinitum*, it

* See page 65.

appears to me that other studies which H. and my father wish me to undertake, must only be carried on in subordination to this object.

I have, perhaps, already reminded you of Hume's example, who, in order to bring his mind, which had got into confusion in consequence of an ill-regulated education, into the right track again, and to strengthen his powers by peaceable seclusion, lived unknown for several years in La Fleche, and then came back another man from what he was when he left home. Now, it is true it would be presumptuous to institute a comparison, which would allow me to hope for such results as proceeded from Hume's talents; and besides, he and I should have different requirements and ideals of happiness; but an analogy may nevertheless subsist.

I do not think of travelling so long as three years.

What do you say to my spending this winter in Kiel, as I am no longer bound to my post in Copenhagen either by duty or interest? It would be no mere pretext, and no doubt a decisive argument with Schimmelman, that if I go back and resume my former mode of life, my health will return to its former indifferent state. . . . In Kiel, as my father knows, I should be able to carry on all my studies with the aid of Hensler's library. . . . .

XXV.

MELDORF, *27th August*, 1797.

I cannot help writing to you again to day. You know that my emotions are apt to carry me away with their violence. Thus your letter has made me so wild with delight that I have felt full of affection to every creature that has come in my way. . . . .

My father, my dear father, clings with such conviction and firmness to the idea of some journey or other, that he would consent with reluctance to an earlier settlement in Kiel. He would consent, for he would be ready to sacrifice anything to me now. I, too, cannot help believing that if it were possible for me to win such an affection as might deepen into a heartfelt willingness to unite herself eternally with me,

absence and distance, cheered by such a prospect and trust, and unremittingly devoted to my cultivation, could be only beneficial to me. I should see a foreign country, and must be a gainer by it. A somewhat lengthened preparation for the holiest society, when one has been already long accustomed to think of oneself as engaged, must, it seems to me, have great advantages. And so many of my present deficiencies I might strive to supply. Dear friend, I should not like to owe anything to fortune, to her prepossessions in my favour, nay, not even to your sisterly interest in me. You will surely not misunderstand me here. What we do not possess in and through ourselves, is not truly ours. I will strive and toil not to be unworthy of your sister, and to deserve, if I cannot win her affection. So much is in my own hands.

The idea shall not have uncontrolled sway; the annihilation of a ruling passion that must be conquered, is too terrible, and the higher and intenser its life, the more convulsive is its resistance to extinction. And must I not fear the possible necessity of its extinction? Its seat in my heart is light and warm, my life is joyful and deep, my mind open to all, all that human love can embrace.

The first few days, my mother showed some annoyance at the length of my stay with you, and she was displeased too with my carelessness in dress, and my refusal to pay all sorts of visits. But the mother's love soon prevailed. Her affection for me was always vehement, and therefore always exacting. I have told you that I have inherited the vehemence and sensitiveness of my disposition, together with my features, from my mother. To-day is my birthday, and all my family have greeted me with the warmest affection. One word more about my sister. She seems to me so worthy of love, that she must win yours too some day.

Farewell. . . . .

XXVI.

MELDORF, 31*st August*.

. . . . You accuse me of a propensity to idealise.

I am sorry that you do not give me credit for sufficient true-heartedness to love the Beautiful devotedly without the

necessity of colouring it more highly by any imagination. If it were as you say, I should be fated to turn perpetually to new objects, till cold experience gradually taught me better, and warned me against such folly with bitter mockery,—till I sank into hopeless misery. Such a warmth is not that of life, but the unhealthy and transitory glow of fever.

If I have anything to thank nature for, her best gift to me was a correct and very rapid judgment, a facility in detecting everything false, incorrect, untrue, that can hardly be imposed upon. While I am ready to adopt any well-grounded opinion, my inmost heart revolts against receiving the judgments of others respecting persons, and whenever I have done so, I have bitterly repented of it.

Manly worth, elevation of intellect, and enthusiasm, are to me the noblest things on earth, superhuman, and the best pledge of our higher destination, heavenly origin, and divine illumination. I cannot worship the abstractions of virtue,—she only charms me when she addresses herself to my heart, speaks through the love from which she springs. I am not blind to the faults of those I love, because I do not speak of them. Either faults cease to exist where there is true excellence, or they are only imperfections. I have never fancied any one perfect, indeed I have rather been liable to err through mistrust and suspicion. I really love nothing but what actually exists: virtue, love, sincerity, purity; where these are, what more need I seek for? I believe that where these qualities are irradiated by the joyousness of innocence, and fortified by a clear, active, cultivated intellect, we have, without any idealising, the only thing that remains to us from the golden age. . . . . .

If you reveal my wishes to Amelia, you must let her know that she is not the object of a blind passion—that it is my first endeavour to acquire her esteem.

XXVII.

MELDORF, *6th September*, 1797.

Even while I was writing my last letter to you, I began to feel the sort of stupor and gloom creeping over me that I

have on my dark days. Whether this is physical, or whether the dazzling brightness of a succession of happy days is necessarily followed by a fit of exhaustion, when external circumstances do not feed the flame, is a mystery to myself. I have at last succeeded by strenuous efforts, in driving away the blackest clouds, and to-day your welcome letter has kindled a fresh life-giving spark within me.

But all my life this inequality of spirits has been my torment. Whenever I have worked hard, of course I mean in special investigations which only serve as means to an end, or amidst the confused heap of materials required by some other object, I seem as if paralysed. When a few days have elapsed, and my new acquisition has fallen into its place, then comes my brightest time. But meanwhile I am good for very little.

The lot of the scholar working amidst his books is a wearisome one. He is ever treading on the brink of pedantry, a yawning chasm, in which, if we were laughing on the subject, we might say he would be buried in dust and dead leaves, if he made a false step. He has to extract honey from wormwood. He must constantly keep his mind on the stretch; can only succeed by slow degrees in his task of self-culture, and measures everything by an ideal standard, which he is often unable to attain from the poverty of his materials,—still oftener from his own want of talent. Sciences which are entirely based on speculation, such as philosophy and mathematics, are free from this disadvantage; and all occupation with them refreshes and quickens the mental powers, when one has fairly got into their spirit. Neither are those liable to get depressed by their studies, who collect and compare, often without the least philosophy, single interesting things, such as natural objects. But he who studies grammar, and rhetoric, and style, seeks and deduces rules and laws, or learns those that others have found, which are indeed important to him as regards the refinement of his taste, and perhaps something higher, but which are so dry,—taken singly, for the most part so unimportant,—must constantly stimulate his ardour, and

keep his affections in play, or he will be in danger of either relaxing his exertions, or acquiring a mechanical pleasure in mere words. In the study of history there is a much higher species of interest. But its immense extent, the difficulty of imprinting all that is needful on the memory, the almost greater difficulty of steadily maintaining a correct point of view, the toil of collecting the most interesting fragments from innumerable books and relics, while conscious of their incompleteness, the repulsive task of wading through an immense amount of what is bad (though in this respect people generally of their own free will do more than is necessary), until at last you have so far reduced all to order, that you can begin to mould the mass into a beautiful form (which it takes years to do)—these preparatory difficulties almost overpower any one who perceives them.

I have long attributed to this cause, and to the still worse state of the professional sciences, which have long been an empty husk, the inertia of the best intellects among us. The life of the ancients in small States, was like that in a large family; even Rome itself was, in reality, as a State, confined within its walls, and to the spots consecrated to the popular assemblies, notwithstanding the enormous extension of its boundaries.

War and the discharge of public functions were extremely liberal occupations, and it was considered that good sense and practice were sufficient qualifications for either. Then there were very few, whose minds had not been developed by the active discharge of these functions, which were not confined, any more than learning, to a particular class. We see nothing among ourselves that can be compared to the indefatigable power and activity of the ancients. They were at all times *men* and free citizens. We are obliged to make a special class of learned men; and, in consequence, we lose sight of the world, of active life, of the best part of ourselves, of reality; and cling to book-knowledge alone. A few escape this fate, to whom their kind genius has given the good fortune and the energy to separate the kernel from the shell, in spite of all difficulties, and to keep their hearts warm and active.

The ancients invented the sciences; the elements of which were not diffused among the vulgar, producing a shallow knowledge; men sought for insight in converse with sages, and there were only two kinds of knowledge,—the common and the philosophical. We lose the simple aspect of nature long before we are able to comprehend the expositions of philosophers. We hear as children that the earth turns round the sun, before the words can convey any idea to us; for the senses will not suffer the imagination to grasp an image of such magnitude. It is the same with everything. On all hands there abound crude doctrines, patchwork theories, assertions on authority.

It is impossible for us to see as clearly as the ancients did. And then their philosophy of human affairs does not satisfy us: we rack our brains and split hairs, and, after all, do not think. Why were they so free from the monstrous absurdities by which we are surrounded?

I have wandered far from my subject, but all that I have said has a bearing upon it; for what I mean is, that there are two things which have a very mischievous effect upon my mind—the disadvantages of my occupations, which are, nevertheless, the only ones open to me in these days, and my own inequality of temperament.

. . . . I must tell you a little about my life here. My friends evince the deepest affection for me; but I am almost frightened to see the exaggerated opinion my father has of me, and his propensity to look upon all his aspirations for me as so certain of accomplishment, that he regards every difficulty I see in the way as mere nonsense. One trait that is common to all of us, has often deprived us of many a happy hour,—we are too apt to be irritated by opinions opposed to our own, and, instead of testing them, either to reject or be persuaded into them. You may find in this an explanation of many points in my character, particularly my habit of hasty, passionate condemnation.

XXVIII.

MELDORF, 18*th September*, 1797.

. . . . . I have written a tremendously long letter to Desaugiers* about the unhappy revolution in Paris,† and endeavoured to set in the clearest light the merits and the innocence of the now proscribed party, and the black guilt and inexpiable crime of the triumphant faction, with all the force of language and logic at my command. It is the only homage which a remote foreigner can bring to oppressed virtue. This has cost me much time and paper. . . . .

I am quite decided not to go to Paris at present. It is a lucky thing for me that the post there, which was offered to me, has fallen to another candidate. I could neither endure the sorrow of seeing such a complete triumph of villainy over virtue, of barbarism over intellect and accomplishments, nor yet of listening to the shameless insults and groundless imputations heaped upon the proscribed by their victors; and as little could I submit to the degrading humiliation of associating with men whom I abhor.

XXIX.

TO AMELIA.

COPENHAGEN, 4*th November*, 1797.

Your remembrance and your image, thank God, are always present to me. Hence my solitude depresses me less than it ever did before; hence, in society, I feel more strange, embarrassed, and unsympathising than ever. The

* The French Chargé d'Affaires at Copenhagen.

† The Revolution of the 18th Fructidor, when the democratic majority of the Directory, alarmed by the growing influence of the moderate and monarchical sentiments in the nation, which threatened the ascendancy of the violent Jacobin party, resolved to overturn the Constitution, surrounded the Councils of Five Hundred and of the Ancients with troops, dispersed the majority of the members, annulled the motions unfavourable to their interests, and condemned the leaders of the opposite party, including most of the men of genius and principle in France, to transportation to Guiana. The immediate results of this revolution were the abolition of the freedom of the press, and of the institution of juries, and the re-enactment of the laws enjoining the banishment of the nobles and priests.

first is good, but the second frightens me, and I feel that it is not right. Schimmelman and Prehn are the only persons with whom I speak of you. No one else has any idea of our engagement. A greater change has taken place in my character than at any former time. I shall certainly be further than ever from foolish and unworthy conduct. Till now, I have been very idle. Strictly speaking, nothing has yet been done. Of course, I am never quite without reading. Homer, Plato, and Cicero lie before me; but I have only read a little of Homer. The constant fogs and clouds prevent me from going on with astronomy. Here, too, I perceive with humiliation the bad effects of my long continued careless inobservance of nature, and feel the necessity of a tolerably intimate acquaintance with phenomena before proceeding to science,—at least, if I am to learn it independently and with insight. Beyond the first evening I have not had any pleasant time yet with Schimmelman. We have been interrupted by strangers. I am fairly besieged with invitations; but I have now an object, and work towards it without suffering myself to be drawn aside. I owe it to you that I am infinitely more tranquil than I ever was before. You will certainly change your wavering, restless friend into a firm, calm man, worthy of your love.

XXX.

11th November.

. . . . I have had numerous invitations. You know that I did not wish to see Grouvelle again, and certainly meant not to visit him. This I kept to, and should have continued to do so, but he, not to be repulsed, sent my friend Desaugiers to me, with an invitation; and, moreover, with strict orders to bring me back with him. He has once since then forced me to come to his house in the same way. I confess that I have no pleasure even in my intercourse with Desaugiers, though he has an excellent heart, because he is always occupied with ideas which have become abhorrent to me, since it has grown so evident that the fearful tragedy is issuing in a disgusting farce, as if in both halves it were played by devils.

I plainly declare that I do not wish to have anything to do with Grouvelle, whose society was once sought by all the refined and intellectual world of Paris. I feel that such intercourse does me no good. It is dazzling outwardly, but hollow, mere empty talk; it goes against my conscience. Nothing but the impossibility of escaping from it without an open breach, has made me put up with it so long. My staying away, making difficulties, or giving downright refusals, would have made any one else give me up as an obstinate fellow. Desaugiers has here no more intimate friend than myself; perhaps not even among his early acquaintance. But here the difference between the friendship of our circle and that of foreigners is most striking. The life and food of our intimacy is the communication of our inmost thoughts, absolute confidence, constituting an individual relation. But between foreigners there is nothing but a higher degree of kind feeling,—if help is wanted, openness and confidence; otherwise, the attention of both is only directed to outward objects. The relation is easily broken, and may be dissolved by a neglect in the *degree* of attention.

XXXI.

TO HIS PARENTS.

COPENHAGEN, *2nd January*, 1798.

I will not begin my first letter in the new year to you, my dearest parents, with general wishes for your happiness, for you will take these for granted, knowing them to be ever in my mind; but with wishes for the health of us all, for an uninterrupted harmony of feeling, and for external prosperity. With regard to the last, I have for some time past felt much inquietude, which I no longer hide from you, since the moment of decision, one way or the other, is daily approaching. Probably rumours of a French expedition against Hanover and Hamburgh may have reached Holstein,—even the newspapers have alluded to it, and it has long attracted our attention. We can scarcely picture to ourselves, in all their details, the frightful consequences of such an enterprise;

but it would be childish not to see that the French, after coming so far to destroy English commerce, would inevitably require us to close the Sound to all English vessels, and place a garrison in Friedensburg to ensure our compliance. However, no salvation could have been looked for from a continuance of the war, if the late King of Prussia had lived. His death, combined with the great impression which the conduct of Austria made on Germany, awakened at first great hopes; and we ventured to look forward to seeing a powerful, well-supported, Prussian army on the Rhine. Nor were we deceived in the disposition of the young king; we must not call him cowardly and weak because he surrendered the last yet unconquered fortresses on the frontier of Germany, for his kingdom is as yet unprepared, and, at the first outbreak, the enemy's forces could occupy all Lower Saxony and Westphalia before any opposition could be offered by a Prussian army. Thus all persons here, who are informed as to the movements of the great powers, live in a state of the most anxious expectation. An army is forming, all officers and soldiers on furlough are recalled, and Magdeburg placed in a state of defence. If France makes a sudden incursion, Prussia will scarcely venture upon a war for the recovery of Hanover. If Prussia has time to prepare, will she not require all the assistance from Holstein which the latter can afford, after having already contributed to the defence of the line of demarcation?

And is not the cause of Hanover and Hamburgh our own? Must we not submit to every demand of France, when she has possession of these? Will she not occupy Holstein, even though we may endeavour to satisfy her by submission? Thus fearful is our position as long as France holds her present views. And it is not probable that she will give them up as long as the war with England lasts. And a termination to this, by means of a fair peace, seems at present hopeless. The congress of Rastadt may decide the fate of Hanover; but even if the dangers now threatening us are diverted for a time, it is but too probable that, at a future period, we may find submission to France the only means of saving the existence of our State.

So the most earnest wish for us all must be peace, and the independence and inviolability of our soil. Holstein, which contains all that is dearest to me in the world,—you, and those whom I have made mine by choice,—and which will, perhaps, be the scene of my future life, is unquestionably in danger. If we can gain time, it is certain that a courageous resistance—let it be understood, a resistance to which we bring our utmost resources—might preserve our soil from devastation, and all we love from the horrors of war, and so fearful an enemy as the French armies of the Rhine; and no less certain that we cannot in any case lose more than by sacrificing Prussia, if Prussia is willing to rise.

But if we choose this plan, we must count the cost of all our sacrifices, and make an unalterable determination not to survive disgrace. . . . .

XXXII.

COPENHAGEN, 30*th January*, 1798.

The kind manner in which you, my dearest parents, have received my account of Moldenhawer's proposition has given me great pleasure.* My last letter renders any further details unnecessary, and you will there find all your questions already answered.

It has rejoiced me to see that you, dearest father, express a just indifference as to the kind of appointment I may receive, provided that it affords us a sufficient income, and a sphere of action at once useful to others and congenial to my talents. My engagement has placed me in a narrower circle, and led me to renounce all plans involving uncertainty as to the results, a great length of time for their execution, or a residence in any distant country; thus freeing my mind from many chimeras, and unsettling yet impracticable projects, and fixing my thoughts with infinitely greater earnestness on what lies near at hand, and the use I can make of it, in my time as well as in my occupations.

* Niebuhr here refers to an offer that he had received of the chair of ancient languages and literature in a philological academy about to be founded in Denmark.

We cannot now build castles in the air, to be realised in some distant future,—of a residence of some years abroad during my youth, which should procure me cultivation and polish almost without effort on my part. My travels can now —and in this light I have always viewed them myself—be only diligent study on an ever changing scene. . . . .

XXXIII.

COPENHAGEN, *2nd February*, 1798.

I shall therefore decline Moldenhawer's offer unreservedly. I am now most anxious to hear your opinion of Schimmelman's proposals, which have at least this recommendation, that they come from a man who, I may almost say, loves and trusts me as a son, who has my welfare at heart, and who is capable of sympathy, affection, and enjoyment to a degree very rarely to be met with. In accepting them I should, it must be confessed, involve myself in government business, but only partially so, and I could easily withdraw as soon as a chance of a professorship in Kiel offered. Business of this kind is not new to me, and presents no difficulties. For the chief talent I possess, or have preserved, besides that of memory, (and, indeed, it is the cause of the latter,) is a very quick comprehension of the matter in hand, a correct and clear perception, which almost invariably seizes at once on the true state of the case. This saves me an infinite amount of time, and as we should restrict our society to a very narrow circle, I should still have leisure enough not wholly to lose sight of my favourite pursuits.

Amelia would wish my journey to be shortened, and I agree with her. England, and at the most two or three months in France, now full of vain-glory over her triumphs, will furnish me with sufficient instruction, and a vast field for observation. But time must decide for us on this point.

You ask after my health, dearest father. For some time it was not as I could wish—my head was unusually heavy and stupid. My labours in the cold halls of the Library brought on another attack of my complaint.

I have re-arranged and supplied the deficiencies in one

portion of the historical department. But my health is not so bad as last spring, when I was imprudent enough to go straight to work in the halls of the Library, heated and lightly dressed as I had come from Count Ludolf's.* Sometimes, too, I read there extracts of works which I cannot well take home with me; thus I have lately read parts of Theophanes, and Luitprand on the Byzantine Empire, and yesterday meditated on some passages of Xenophon concerning the Greek tactics, which I have been studying among other things this winter, and of which I have obtained a tolerable conception, especially those of the Macedonians and Lacedæmonians.

XXXIV.

TO AMELIA.

COPENHAGEN, *3rd February*, 1798.

. . . . How will you bear my asperities and all my faults? There are defects of temperament which can scarcely be conquered. My irritability, my egotism, is of this kind. To efface these without filling their place with any other feeling produces apathy and injures the character. Love may conquer them. To be strong in love is the only way to become noble, and all softening through education, which is not based on love, is merely pernicious. I remember that I was terribly passionate in my childhood, but being often reproved for it, strove with such success to attain indifference, that for a time I was as if dead, and only by degrees recovered at all a vivid feeling of real injuries. It would have been better to have let me alone till nobler feelings had replaced this vehemence.

XXXV.

TO HIS FATHER.

COPENHAGEN, *13th February*, 1798.

. . . . . In the great world here every one lives in a constant round of gaiety, and the same is true of the other classes, according to their different ranks. Business is hurried

* The Austrian ambassador, who had kindly assisted Niebuhr in his Persian studies.

through, to leave time for amusements. These form the staple of conversation, and one party furnishes the poverty-stricken materials for another. Next to these, politics possess the strongest interest, yet even they not a very vivid one. In some houses they are the all-important topic, and swallow up every thing else. One would think there could now be but one voice on these questions, that the Gallomaniacs must be silent, and the arch-aristocrats descend from their claims and their credulity, but unfortunately it is quite the contrary. The former ignore all the excesses of the French government, and openly rejoice in its overweening power, while the latter are filled with indiscriminating anger.

Thus it is impossible to agree with either side, and to avoid the dislike of both. For my part I really do not seek disputes, though my position has exercised my lungs, my tongue, and my logic considerably.

The apprehensions, of which I lately wrote to you, dearest father, may apparently be laid aside for the present. The firmness of the King of Prussia seems to have diverted the French from their project of occupying Hanover, and without ceremony taking it away from the King of England, according to the same rule of force by which they seize on everything that excites their desires. Probably, too, the consciousness of their irresistible strength, as it has induced them to make some temporary concessions, will enable them to exercise coercion at any future moment as successfully as at the present. Who knows that they are not hoping to find some ground of quarrel with Hamburgh, by means of their commissioner in that city, and that they may not yet bring forward at Rastadt a demand for the sequestration of Hanover? for as they treat justice with contempt, they invariably contrive to throw the blame of the failure of their attempts at peace on their adversaries, whereas their own requisitions are always unprecedented, and such as the opposite party cannot concede. To hear such conduct defended, and the principle advocated that the utmost possible increase of their power is to be desired,—a principle whose partisans, though for the

most part hypocrites themselves, talk as if the right were exclusively on their side, and calumniate and misrepresent the opinions of their antagonists,—is, indeed, perfectly intolerable. I am very curious to see whether any of our convoyed vessels will be captured; whether the defence of our ships of war will be regarded as a crime; whether requisitions will be made to Hamburgh to close the Elbe, and expel all emigrants, and similar demands made to this country; whether Grouvelle will be sent as minister to Sweden, and Leans-Bourdon, the thoroughly Jacobinical commissioner at Hamburgh, be made ambassador here in his place,—all possible contingencies, and all dreadful to us.

I foresaw the absorption of Switzerland. As to England, I am in a state of doubtful expectation. I do not believe in a naval expedition against her. Would it were true! for a dozen barges filled with bombs would infallibly destroy the monster, if it were not dispersed or shattered by the waves. The good fortune and boldness of the French causes me much more alarm. Several squadrons, starting from several different points, and consisting of a multitude of armed vessels of all kinds, might attack the English coasts at the same time; could they succeed in landing troops everything might be feared from the bravery and discipline of their soldiers, the unserviceableness of the English forces, and from the rebels in Ireland, and the traitors in England. . . .

XXXVI.

TO AMELIA.

COPENHAGEN, *2nd March*, 1798.

. . . . As I was standing here about noon, the sun shone so warmly into my dull room, and the sky was so brilliantly blue above the high roofs of my neighbours, that I could not refrain from going out into the fresh air, which I have not tasted for a long time, and not desired for still longer. The air was even more refreshing than I expected, and allured me on and on, though there was as yet no sign of life in grass or tree, no sign of richness or beauty. There is a great charm in the mildness of early spring, it affects the

feelings so gently and soothingly. You reminded me once, that the first time we saw each other at your father's, I told you of my dislike to bright winter days. This feeling is still invincible, and the cloudy autumn, and the depth of winter, whose shadows invite to social pleasures and to meditation, are as dear and welcome to me, as the shivering spring is disagreeable. The latter, indeed, generally brings sickness to me, for the unhealthy air after the rough cold winds of winter, and the exhaustion of my solitary toils, is more than I can stand; and then, too, nothing is so hateful to my eyes as the dead earth in the glare of light. Certainly we ought not to allow ourselves to be too much under the control of such impressions, but one cannot entirely get rid of their influence where they are very strong.

XXXVII.

TO HIS PARENTS.

6th March, 1798.

I have only spoken warmly of Souza two or three times to you, and yet he has gained a very high place in my affections.

Perhaps it falls to the lot of very few young people to have advances made to them by so many of the most remarkable men of the day as my good or evil genius has brought me in contact with; and no one has displayed more cordiality towards me, a more decided wish to contract a lasting friendship with me, than this most amiable man. Jacobi had prepossessed him in my favour, and Schimmelman had strengthened the impression; thus he saw me through my friend's eyes. I have by no means availed myself of his advances to the full extent, but I have nevertheless seen enough of him to love him heartily, and to possess full intimacy with him.

He has a great amount of information, is a very good speaker, has seen a great deal, is a very thinking man, and has withal the very agreeable characteristic, that by the kindness of his manners, nay, even by the nobleness of his physiognomy, he draws out those with whom he converses,

so that with him you find, you cannot tell why, that you have a much greater flow of words, and more available thoughts, than in ordinary conversation. Unfortunately he has been recalled hence very quickly, and goes on Friday to Hamburgh; I am uncertain whether to engage in business of his own, or to enter on a dangerous mission from his court, for on this subject he observes a silence that I have no right to break. My journey to England pleases him much; he has visited that country, and has a real attachment to it, though not so strong as he once had. He has given me a letter to one of his friends, Sir Thomas Rivers, and offered me one to Lord Lansdowne, and one to Mr. Wyndham, in order that I may be personally acquainted with the English minister; but I hesitate about making use of the last. Sir Thomas Rivers is a great scholar. Count Rantzau gives me a letter to William Roscoe, and I reckon on having letters from you to Schönborn, Rennell, and Russell. Moldenhawer gives me introductions to Watson, Former, Ford, and Bryant; and Torkelin has offered me one to Lord Moira. . . .

XXXVIII.

KIEL, 13*th May*, 1798.

. . . The weather was beautiful when I got to Hamburgh, and when I enquired at the coach-office for Jacobi's, a note was handed to me whose contents were equally delightful and unexpected, for it contained an invitation to stay at his house; thus the main object of my journey was much facilitated. But this offer stood in the way of other plans, for how could I stay away any length of time from Jacobi, after he had treated me with so much kindness. . . . . .

I hope I have learnt much from Jacobi this time, his society is more improving than that of any other man I know; he treated me like a brother, and my conversations with him are among the best hours of my life. Souza was equally affectionate. Klopstock was unchanged, and delighted to see me. We arrived here yesterday. The Henslers remain in town till Friday. The Vosses arrive this evening,

and we shall most likely go with them to Eutin. We shall visit Moltke afterwards.

To these letters may be added a few extracts from Niebuhr's Diaries, which are calculated to throw light on his character during this period of his life :—

Probably written in the autumn of 1794.

"I made it my first occupation to-day to pursue my meditations on what experience and reflection have shown me to be the daily duties of pure morality and wisdom, and to note down what should serve me as a guide and rule. This new essay is to be instead of that which I wrote in the spring, and of which I am now almost ashamed, though I do not like to destroy it. On the other hand, it is a cheering witness to me that I have not worked in vain, but have really advanced in goodness and knowledge. How weak I was this spring; how governed and led by passion and vague opinions! I could not say positively, *I will;* I was obliged to make it conditional, and so accomplished nothing. Now, I do not ask myself whether I can do a thing, I command myself to do it. I hope I have by this time brought my passions tolerably under control. Vanity is now the chief enemy that I have to contend against, and absence of mind; uninterrupted work is the best defence against both. In this, therefore, I must not relax, and hence must be on my guard against society and dissipation."

A page, written probably in the spring of 1797, contains the following passages :—

"I have been too remiss; I must be more strict with myself, if I am to reach my goal with honour."

"So long as we receive what is delivered to us, with the ears and eyes rather than with the understanding, we cannot survey it with rapidity and insight; hence, also, depth and comprehensiveness of view are impossible. Words are the

dangerous shallows that so often obstruct my progress. O, what will help me to inward, voluntary, deep thought? What will break the talisman that still keeps me spell-bound under the yoke of imagination?"

"One hour, at least, every morning to be devoted to clearing up my thoughts on a given subject.

"Two hours to mathematics, algebra, chemistry, natural philosophy.

"An extensive knowledge of *facts;* astronomy, mathematical and physical geography; these are the rational and scientific basis of political geography, ancient as well as modern, and of history.

"General laws of material nature, and meteorology.

"Description of natural objects, animal, vegetable, and inorganic.

"Distinct consciousness of the rules of my moral being. Philosophy.

"As my historical study, to work out the chapter on chronology and chronometry; also (before my return) that on grammar.

"The problem is to get through the greatest quantity possible each day, taking care, at the same time, not to overstrain the power of application.

"1. To avoid all that taxes the powers fruitlessly; all dreamy activity.

"2. Self-examination; clearness of thought; accurate definitions; exercises of the imagination.

"3. Diligent reflection; weighing the work performed; zeal; to harden myself against effeminacy."

In another paper, probably written rather later, which, as it is said to be intended only for his own eye, cannot be inserted, he expresses "the holy resolve, now more and more, to purify his soul, so that it may be ready at all times to return without fear to the Eternal Source from which it sprang."

There are several papers of a similar kind in his

22310

diaries, which express the purest resolves and purposes of a noble youthful soul; and through all there breathes the spirit of the purest morality, and severe self-judgment.

After passing the winter in Copenhagen, he returned to Holstein, in April, 1798, in order to spend a few months there before setting out on his travels to England. His chief aim in going thither, beside the general advantages of a residence in a foreign country, and the further prosecution and extension of his studies, was to brace up and strengthen both his mental and physical energies, in preparation for active life. He felt that the one needed bracing, since from never having been obliged to regulate his habits according to those of others, except during the short time that he was at Count Schimmelman's, he had become too dependent on the little details of life; and the other, in order to counteract a certain one-sidedness in his cast of mind that had caused him to neglect entirely the study of natural objects. He felt that he stood, so to speak, outside the world of realities;—that nature and human life—the various functions of civil life which are closely connected with the internal economy of the State, were unknown regions to him, which it was necessary for him to survey before he could take a comprehensive view of the relations of the external world, and of the various conditions of humanity, either as a scholar or a statesman.

His three months stay in Holstein passed away very happily in the society of those who were dearest to him on earth.

CHAPTER IV.

NIEBUHR'S JOURNEY TO ENGLAND, AND RESIDENCE IN LONDON AND EDINBURGH, FROM JUNE, 1798, TO NOVEMBER, 1799.—VISIT TO HOLSTEIN, AND APPOINTMENT IN COPENHAGEN, MAY, 1800.

TOWARDS the end of June Niebuhr sailed from Cuxhaven, to which place his father had accompanied him, and landed, after a tedious voyage of more than a week, at Yarmouth.

Of Niebuhr's residence in England, we have no account but from his letters to his betrothed; no others of that date have been preserved. Those to his parents, which were so unfortunately burnt, contained many details of general interest respecting English political and civil institutions, the character of the nation, and remarkable individuals. The letters to his betrothed are of a more personal character. They afford a general view of what he learnt during his absence, and the advantages he derived from it; and, above all, a delineation by his own hand of the inward workings of his own mind, and the characteristics of his nature, from which we can see how thoroughly he knew, and how severely he criticised himself, and watch the struggles of a noble spirit to realise its highest aspirations.

In his journal there occurs the following list of the aims which he wished more especially to keep in view, during his stay in London :—

"I will strive to obtain by reading and enquiry,

1. A more complete notion of the constitution of England.
2. A fuller acquaintance with its topography.
3. A knowledge of the ordinary measures, weights, prices, &c.
4. Information respecting the character, talents, and lives of distinguished persons.
5. „ „ „ literary institutions, education, schools.
6. „ „ „ mode of life of the different classes.
7. „ „ „ imposts.
8. „ „ „ army and navy.
9. „ „ „ banks and trade.
10. „ „ „ literature of all kinds, authors; publishing trade.
11. „ „ „ East and West Indies.

In Dalrymple's library, to make catalogues of the Hindoo books under the following heads :—

(*a*) Those concerning the Hindoo nation,
   1. Matters relating to antiquities, history, and national character.
   2. History of the provinces and of the Mogul Empire.
   3. Modern history since the fall of ditto.
   4. Descriptions of single provinces.

(*b*) Those concerning the Company,
   1. Its charter and privileges.
   2. Its direction, trade, and European affairs.
   3. Its establishments in the East Indies, their constitution and administration."

Niebuhr became acquainted with many distinguished men in England and Scotland. The first friendship

which he formed in London was with the aged Schönborn, who resided there at that time, and acted sometimes as Secretary of Legation, sometimes as the Danish Chargé d' Affaires, of whom a spirited and well written memoir appeared in 1836, entitled, "Schönborn and his Contemporaries." He was a very original man, of remarkable talents and information; profoundly versed in ancient and modern systems of philosophy, and familiar with the ancient writers on mathematics and natural philosophy. He had been for four years Danish consul at Algiers; was a contemporary and friend of Klopstock and the Counts Stolberg, and known in his earlier years by several poems in the pindaric style, which appeared in the Deutsches Musæum and other periodicals. At a later period he returned to Holstein, where he retired into private life. His friendship with Niebuhr subsisted till his death. At the time of which we are now speaking, it was the depth of his intellect and the uprightness of his character which won Niebuhr's respect and attachment; it was not until a later period that his young friend learnt to estimate the warm affection which flowed in the depths of his soul with almost youthful enthusiasm, while outwardly he appeared cold even to indifference.

Niebuhr had letters of introduction to many of the political characters of that day, as well as to most of the noted men of letters. He only availed himself of a few of the former class, but the latter procured him almost everywhere a friendly reception through the reputation which his father enjoyed in England. Those with whom he became most intimate were, in England,

Rennell, Russell, Marsden, Banks, Dalrymple, Mallet du Pan, and some others, but especially Wilkins, who had been, from 1760 to 1786, in the civil service in the East Indies, was one of the founders of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, and has since acquired celebrity by his grammars and lexicons of Sanscrit and other oriental languages, and his translations of various oriental works. In Edinburgh, where he entered himself as a student at the University, Niebuhr's chief friends were, Playfair, (with whom he renewed his acquaintance at Rome many years after,)—Coventry, Robinson, Hope, Gregory, Home, Rutherford, Walker, Grant, who had long resided in the East Indies, and above all Mr. Scott, an old friend of his father's in India. He became acquainted with a great number of his fellow-students, but formed no intimacy with them; there were only two among them, named Moorhouse and Lambe, to whom he became really attached. His acquaintance with the English men of letters was only slight, owing to his visiting London during the summer months, when nearly all of them were absent.

He always retained a great predilection for the English nation. Their great consistency of character, their general strict integrity, and their great truthfulness, raised them in his estimation above every other nation, excepting his own; and therefore he was more disposed to form lasting connections with individuals belonging to it than with any other foreigners; in fact most of his foreign friendships were with Englishmen.

The subjects which Niebuhr principally studied in Edinburgh, were mathematics and the physical sciences;

among the latter chiefly natural philosophy, chemistry, agriculture, and mineralogy. Philological and historical studies he only prosecuted by himself, and by way of recreation. In these departments he regarded the learned men there as incomparably inferior to the Germans. But besides the scientific knowledge which he acquired in the course of his attendance on the college lectures, he gained during his visit, through observation, intercourse and research, an insight into the mutual relation of the various parts of the state machine, which it would have been impossible for him to obtain elsewhere. The information which he thus acquired, may certainly be considered as the real foundation of his political and financial eminence, although he attended no lectures on these subjects in Scotland. He indeed frequently expressed the opinion, that finance, considered in its practical application, was rather an art than a science, and could not be handed down from the professorial chair, but was only to be learnt by personal investigation, and study.

Niebuhr often acknowledged with thankfulness how much England had taught him. He had previously been only capable of making such additions to his knowledge as he could derive from conversation, or books; now he had learnt to read nature also, and the objects that spoke to the eye alone. He felt too that he had gained much in courage, experience, and aptitude, through this tour.

He left London, towards the end of October, for Edinburgh, where he remained about a year, made some little excursions into the southern part of the

Highlands, and then returned, by way of Manchester, Sheffield, &c. to London, where he only staid a few days on this occasion. He had, in the first instance, formed plans of more extended travel in the interior of England, chiefly in order to visit the great manufacturing towns; he also wished to have penetrated further into the Scottish Highlands; why these schemes were only partially carried into execution, will appear from his letters to his betrothed, which, besides some recollections of his own verbal accounts, are the only source from which any records of this period of his life have been obtained.

In the beginning of November 1799, Niebuhr returned to Holstein, and spent the following winter there among his friends. In the middle of April 1800, he proceeded to Copenhagen, where he met with a hearty welcome from Count Schimmelman, and was received with great kindness by the Crown Prince.

A few weeks after his arrival, he was appointed Assessor at the Board of Trade for the East India Department, and secretary and head clerk of the Standing Commission of the affairs of Barbary, (or the Direction of the African Consulates,) with a salary which was not indeed large, but sufficient for his wishes, and for a quiet retired life, such as he and his Amelia had firmly determined to lead; a life that was in accordance with their tastes, and from which they were both resolved not to depart, in spite of all allurements to the contrary.

Extracts from Niebuhr's Letters during his stay in England and Scotland, 1798—1799.

XXXIX.

TO AMELIA.

CUXHAVEN, 28*th June*, 1798.

Good morning, dearest! You are most likely writing at this moment, and so we may fancy ourselves sitting opposite to each other: this sense of your nearness consoles me for our separation, and its good effect will be strengthened when the compulsory, prison-like inactivity to which I am doomed at present is succeeded by uncontrolled activity: then I shall look up to you in thought, to see if your glance of satisfaction sets the seal upon my performances, or your sad eye says that I have failed in my duty.

I have been sitting in a little room here for several hours this morning, which I have spent in reading an English magazine, and have been very agreeably surprised by one of its articles—a notice and specimens of a poem that has just come out, "Naucratia, or Naval Dominion," by H. G. Pye. There is a great bustle in the house, and the mingled sounds of children crying, nurses singing, people shouting, the loud voices of the Englishmen calling to the waiters, and the still more resounding and unintelligible conversation among themselves, has as stunning an effect upon me, sitting all alone in my little room, as the noise of a set of drunkards upon their sober comrade. Meanwhile, I have already found that necessity is an excellent teacher,—that nothing makes us so active as having no one to help us, so discreet as having to rely upon ourselves alone, so self-collected as feeling our own individuality sharply outlined off from all others, which must be the case with the utter stranger; and thus I am full of hope that the bitter cup of separation will strengthen my enervated soul as much as we expect, and immensely invigorate my energies. That must be our best consolation. . . . .

XL.

LONDON, 21*st July*, 1798.

I find very little that interests me in the mere external appearance even of the most remarkable city; and London, however little it resembles our towns, has extremely little variety in itself. Perhaps, on this account, I am not adapted for a traveller, and still less because what is foreign has, in general, little attraction or value for me. . . . .

The day before yesterday, I presented my father's letters to Russell, Rennell, and Mallet du Pan, and enjoyed a very pleasant day in consequence. The two first are very unaffected warm-hearted men, who were evidently glad to see me, and do all in their power to help me.

What Mr. Russell has done, out of regard to my father, would not often be done with us; and it is perhaps the main distinction between our method of treating a stranger and that here, that we more quickly conceive a personal attachment and try to give pleasure; while the English, in the same case, spare no pains to be of use, but leave their friend to seek out his amusements for himself. Russell has had a fever, and is still taking quinine; he looks older than my father and seems much more infirm; nevertheless, he took me yesterday to Sir Joseph Banks and the British Museum, where he introduced me to all the curators; asked Dalrymple to introduce me to the meeting of the Royal Society, and finished by introducing me to a Dr. Gartshorn, who has asked me to dine with him to-day. Rennell's kind, simple, animated face impresses you still more agreeably, and it is principally through him and his directions that I can obtain what may prove the way to my appointment in Kiel. He has a family, and speaks with so much feeling of the happiness he enjoys in it, that I wish above all things to win his confidence and get intimate with him. Marsden, whose book is so excellent, seems jovial and open-hearted; he interests me much, and I should fancy him a most highly cultivated man; but he is probably too wealthy and too fashionable to admit me to familiar intercourse.

The dinner at the Royal Society fully justified the sentence that has often been passed upon such meetings. It was a feast, and the conversation extremely indifferent; in fact, below the every-day conversation of learned men in Germany. We must not be unjust to ourselves: it is our own fault that we are not nobler than we are in general; but whether the Good and the Beautiful find a temple in more hearts here in England, is a great question, and worth the solving, if it can be solved. Everybody here is in action; idleness and half-done work are certainly less common than with us; practical ability is certainly more general—a false show of knowledge rarer; a smooth exterior gains little respect; the word of a man may be depended on, and I believe the better sort trouble themselves little about the opinion of others. But it cannot be denied that mediocrity is very common, and is by no means looked down upon: that, as Schönborn says, it is a question whether genius is an attribute of this nation, and certain that true warmheartedness* is extremely rare; a little of the fog that "Allwill"† talks about seems very prevalent,—hence, also, the great indifference, the one-sidedness, the self-will. You see that novelty has not so raised my opinion as to place me in danger of having, hereafter, to moderate a flaming enthusiasm. It would indeed need much to make me feel here as in my fatherland,—to make other advantages compensate for the absence of that harmony of sentiment, which made me happy in the society of our friends, even before you were mine.

I think that most learned men here, as elsewhere, look more to the authority that a man brings with him, than to his talents and intellect. My father's name, which is very celebrated here, introduces me everywhere. But I look forward with pleasure to the time that will transfer me from a rather too conspicuous position to the quiet of Scotland.

* *Innigkeit.*—The term warm-heartedness is scarcely an adequate translation of the German word, though perhaps the nearest to it our language affords. *Innigkeit* implies depth and sincerity in addition to warmth of feeling.

† Allwill's Letters, a novel, by Jacobi.

XLI.

LONDON, *27th July*, 1798.

. . . . . London does not exercise a cheering influence on me, though I have had occasional hours of intense enjoyment here. . . . .

I owe my pleasantest moments in London to the arts. My good fortune has ordained it so, that a splendid collection consisting of paintings of the Italian school, with some antique busts and vases, which is about to be disposed of, has been on show for the last few weeks. It contains pieces by all the greatest masters; but after the *chef-d'œuvres* of Raphael, &c., the Lucretia of Guercino has filled me with more admiration than anything else. It was almost the first thing I had seen in England that I felt a very strong impulse to describe to you; but what words could reproduce the impression made by the countenance of this fair, youthful matron? These paintings have taught me, for the first time, how high art can rise, and how great is its power; and further, how first-rate excellence alone is worth anything in works of art.

You have probably heard of the Shakspeare Gallery, which owes its origin to a few publishers and picture-dealers, who have brought out a magnificent edition of the poet, with copper-plates, for which they have procured drawings from the best English artists by high payment, and appealing to their patriotism (where they have it). Very few of these engravings have pleased me; but the productions of a young man, named Westall, form a decided exception. He has also drawn a series of illustrations to Milton, which indicate real genius.

I have not seen much of Schönborn for the last week past; two days he has been out of town, and on the rest I have hardly been able to find him at home. On Sunday we had another conversation, in which we came a great deal nearer to each other; at least, I have conceived a high respect for his philosophical knowledge and his extraordinary acquaintance with all the philosophical and mathematical writers. It was interesting to me to watch his bold

intellect as it played with the exposition of mythology, even when he did not interpret the legends, but only imposed a meaning on them.

If we lived longer in the same neighbourhood,—had I systematic knowledge which I could really call my own,—could I repay him with the same pure silver (all personal conversation may be compared to private bank-notes, which are valueless beyond their own narrow sphere of circulation), no doubt the barriers of which I spoke to you in my last would give way.

If, even with him, I feel oppressed in finding a want of personal interest, you can easily imagine how much more this is the case with the English. The superficiality and insipidity of nearly all the conversations to which I have listened, or in which I have joined, is really depressing. As far as I hear, little is said about politics, which is a good thing,—much better than our German mania for going beyond our depth on such subjects; but, that narrative and common-places form the whole staple of conversation, from which all philosophy is excluded,—that enthusiasm and loftiness of expression are entirely wanting, depresses me more than any personal neglect of which, as a stranger, I might have to complain; for of this my share is not large, and I bear it easily. I am, besides, fully persuaded that I shall find things very different in Scotland; of this I am assured by several Scotchmen whom I already know. . . . .

I have not availed myself of my introductions to fashionable society, and hesitate considerably to expose myself to the mortification of a haughty reception, though it is also possible that they might procure for me much that would be interesting.

XLII.

LONDON, 10*th August*, 1798.

. . . . Really, in summer, London is not a very interesting city, and the libraries are at present my chief sources of information. In the morning, from eleven or twelve till towards four, I am at Sir Joseph Banks' library, which is

very liberally opened to all scholars; on Thursday, during the same hours, I was at that of the Royal Society; in the afternoon I am at Dalrymple's. Sir Joseph's librarian, a Swede named Dryander, who is very civil to every one, and still more to me, as a sort of fellow-countryman, because we understand one another when he speaks Swedish and I Danish, affords me every possible facility in the use of any book which may be of importance to me.

I am extremely sorry that I have found no friend inclined to take me about, and explain to me what is most worthy of observation, nor to remove by his experience the obstacle which necessarily lie in the path of one who has not been accustomed to find his own way into unknown regions. I regret that Schönborn has not shown more zeal in this respect, or perhaps has not a sufficient knowledge of men and things; for I feel that this valuable time might certainly have been better spent than among books, though I am also perfectly aware that this mode of passing my time is far better than that of many travellers, who run hither and thither, and look and wonder without comprehending. Vauxhall, Ranelagh, Astley's, the Royal Circus, &c. &c., which one likes to see as favourite amusements of the public, are scarcely worth the money and the time. I have seen St. Paul's, and mean sometime to ascend the dome, whence there is a fine view over the city. I have also lately visited Westminster Abbey, and looked with reverence and gratitude upon the busts of so many great men. But how characteristic is the equally honourable position accorded to so many nameless and insignificant persons by the side of the noblest dead! What a quantity of nonsense is to be seen on these venerable walls! One man writes a Hebrew inscription on the tomb of his daughter; on another, I think also belonging to a woman, there is an Abyssinian inscription; Chatham has an absurdly over-burdened allegorical monument; Sidney and Russell have none at all, and on Milton's, the man who erected it, gives his own name and title in several lines; Milton is mentioned in the quietest manner.

At Sir Joseph Banks' I have made the acquaintance of

Dr. Afzelius, a Swede, who was with Wittström in Africa; he is by all accounts an excellent man; his exterior gives me the impression of sociability and sincerity. Africa and the new discoveries there have been the subject of many conversations with my acquaintance. . . . .

To have some society in the evening, I went to Mallet du Pan's. The party there presented the attractions and the defects of true French society;—interesting anecdotes were related in well-chosen language, but there was an utter absence of dignity, wisdom,—all that speaks to the heart. . .

17th.—I saw last week Captain Bligh, who has introduced the bread-fruit tree into the West Indies, and whose crew during the first attempt had mutinied, and cast him out in an open boat, in which condition he performed a voyage of many hundred miles. He has a noble physiognomy. . . . .

XLIII.

LONDON, *7th September*, 1798.

The autumn draws on, and the bright season of the year is over. With the cold foggy mornings and the dark evenings, I have grown serious too; I feel the alterations which the change of the seasons always work in my still too susceptible organisation. I always suffered so under these various changes that I used to fancy myself a new man with every season of the year, because my new sensations and emotions were so powerful just when the old ones had become so weak; and this revolution raised me heaven-high for a time. It cannot deceive me now; I cannot even be grateful for so delusive a favour. What is good-humour, what is gaiety worth, if its source is not in ourselves? To find the inward source is what I strive after: to succeed in this endeavour demands faith in the free energy of the will for its support and animation.

Perhaps the sensations produced by the changes of the seasons have some effect upon every one whose life-thread the Fates have spun finer than that of common men.

We all share something of the nature of the world which surrounds us, and are, perhaps, in closer dependence on it

than our fair dreams will allow us to confess; and the consciousness of this is doubtless the most vivid in him who strives the most earnestly to obtain deliverance from it. But if he can in some measure succeed, he will find that he has gained freedom in many other ways besides.

My thoughts often travel back a year, when I am alone and unoccupied. Then, indeed, I saw a light; but it was a light in a storm, a flickering glow, the sun had not yet risen that has now scattered the clouds from which the storm broke.

I have read a good many political writings lately, indeed, devoted a great part of the day to them. Now I have got so far that I shall soon be able to give up this employment. I have groped into every hole and corner for information, in order to obtain a correct notion of the very complicated politics of this empire, and of the present crisis, which to the superficial reader must appear a tedious confusion, barren of celebrated men,—to the careful examiner, a wonderful, unprecedented, but horrible drama. My heart has been wounded more deeply with every step towards its development, and all ideal notions of the people's capability of great things in a state of liberty, which were hitherto such welcome intruders, are now fled for ever. I cannot bear to spoil a letter to you with the account of actions and men which do not concern us. But because it has occupied me, and because I should tell you all about it if we were together, I will say this much to you, that, in the printed documents of the conspirators, I have learnt to know men, who, while possessing almost unequalled eloquence, began a career which led them into crime, and made them the cause of deep misery to numbers of their fellow-citizens; very different men from those who are the objects of admiration to our fools; extraordinary men, but men whose existence is the curse of their country. The politics of such a party is something higher than those which we both disapproved on principle, and which I promised you to handle cautiously in spite of the current of inclination.

What I have been studying lately borders on history; it does not concern the colour of the garment, but the shape of

the figure; but as regards this topic also, I shall soon have reached my goal, and shall then turn my attention easily and completely from this field.

I continue to derive much instruction from the library of the distinguished man who has treated me with so much kindness, but I shall soon have attained all the advantage I want from it; that is, I shall have extended my own literary knowledge as far as time and opportunity permit, and finished a notice of the German books it contains, which I am writing for its owner, as the only way in which I can in some measure repay his kindness. . . . .

XLIV.

LONDON, 21*st September*, 1798.

. . . . My favourite amusement here is the theatre. In spite of all its defects we have nothing like it across the water. Many foreigners, who, in general, can enter very little into the spirit of any thing truly English, find a thousand things here to carp at, and in truth there is much to criticise. But however hypochondriacal and ill-humoured a man may feel, if he is not too stupid to understand a joke, the English comic stage will certainly put him into spirits again, for it is rich in interesting plays, and clever actors. Tragedy has only two great artists: Mrs. Siddons, who played Lady Macbeth lately in the most elevated style, quite free from the national fault of a false declamation of the serious passages, and from every impropriety of demeanor; and a celebrated actor, who, however, stands far below Mrs. Siddons in correctness of expression. . . . .

XLV.

LONDON, 30*th September*, 1798.

Last Sunday, a heavenly autumn day, I went to see Nicolai, at Richmond. We took a boat across the Thames, and I made a pilgrimage to Twickenham to see Pope's garden. Oh! that I could thus visit with you the monuments of those men whose memory excites a wish to have lived in their times. The garden has been preserved

unaltered, as Pope laid it out. The monument he erected to the mother he so dearly loved is still standing; but the cypresses that he planted round it have all died out except two, which still show here and there a green shoot. Hedges and old-fashioned flower-beds occupy the left side of the garden, and in the centre stands a bower, the trees of which have now grown to a gigantic height, and, with the recollection of the great men who once trod this sward, inspire the awe of a sacred grove. They who will may call the grotto, the cool retreat in which Pope loved to sit with his most intimate friends, a toy—to me it was more. The prospect it commands must be allowed by all to be enchantingly beautiful,—the Thames and its incomparably charming banks. Before the grotto stood an old weeping-willow, now almost dead, and propped up with care, also from Pope's times. The house is not shown. It is inhabited, and therefore frequent visits would probably disturb the occupants. But it ought not to be inhabited; it ought to be a temple for the grove. The many beautiful views from Richmond also afforded me extreme delight.

XLVI.

TO COUNT MOLTKE.

LONDON, *9th October*, 1798.

. . . . You will have heard most of my adventures from Milly, when she had the happiness of seeing you and your wife again after your journey. In future I will send something to you also as opportunity offers. This will be rather subjective than objective. I know no nation to which I would rather belong as a citizen than the English; not only on account of their Constitution, but from my delight in the hard-working, active intellect, and the strong, straightforward common sense of the thinking men, and because of the superior, almost universal cultivation of the burgher class, strictly so called, and, as I believe, of the farmers, who might put to shame many a conceited scholar, and many a high-bred, polished aristocrat. Of the English scholars, on the

contrary, I have a very mean opinion: I keep to my assertion, that they are without originality; also, that England can boast of no true poets at the present time. And yet literary men are the only people with whom a foreigner can come into close contact; for only a very brilliant intellect or external advantages can procure him admittance to the interior of families. These are only open to natives, and I think it right that it should be so, for, in fact, what can a foreigner bring with him, unless he be an extremely distinguished man, to make his friendship wanted, when people have been long surrounded with friends already? I positively shrink from associating with the young men on account of their unbounded dissoluteness, which makes me feel that I should be more likely to meet with uncourteousness and repulse from them than cordial friendship. You see, therefore, dearest Moltke, how lonely I still am, for you know that I do not go where I might have the entrée if I do not like the people, and you can pretty well estimate how much I trouble myself about the scholars; and that, if I should like to be a citizen of England, it would be an essential condition, not only to have Milly unalterably my own, but to plant a colony of you friends around us. Whether it will be different on the other side of the Tweed, a few weeks will show me. However, your friend is a silly child to dislike England because of the unpleasantness of his isolated position. For nature is very lovely here; it is cheering to see the cultivation of the soil, and the prosperity of the inhabitants; and the immense accumulation of industry, wealth, and resources throughout the empire is most magnificent. You very likely know from Milly, that if Schönborn were not here I should literally live in solitude. But this friend I shall never forget, and cannot give you too high an idea of him; and when I am alone, my time is not wasted. I have more than ever turned my thoughts inward, and striven to attain mental freedom; I have begun to reflect more than formerly, and felt the need of extent and completeness of cultivation with a force that has shaken the empire of indolence, of "chaos and old night," and will at

last assuredly destroy it. I feel that I am capable of great things, and called to perform them. I have vowed to myself to clear up the confusion that has always reigned in my mind, and to replace it by order. These efforts will gain strength in Edinburgh, whatever the professors may be, for if they cannot teach me mathematics and astronomy, I will teach myself; and chemistry, natural history, and agriculture are indisputably well taught there. I ardently long to form friendships there, ascribe my difficulty in finding friends to my own defects, and regret it, but in any case mean to keep a good courage, and *look forward* to the time *when I shall be truly happy!* O, how great a thing it is to be able to express this confidence! . . . .

XLVII.

TO AMELIA.

NEWCASTLE, *25th October.*

A day of rest after three weary days of travelling. . . . . I will take the best hours of to-day for you, and, in the occupation of telling you all that is most interesting about my journey, seek the resting-point from which to control the whirl of continual change; so I will talk to you this evening, in the gloomy, dirty inn-parlour, hundreds of miles away, as if we were sitting together before the fire.

The modes of travelling in England are very different from those which are so far in use among us, as are also the posting regulations.

Open carriages are something unheard of, even to the country people, as far as I yet know England; in Yarmouth only a sort of car is used. All burdens are carried on carts of an excellent build and extraordinary strength, in general with two wheels, only the heavy waggons have four; the former, drawn by from one to four horses harnessed before each other; the latter, sometimes by eight, or perhaps even more, both for agricultural purposes or the carriage of goods. Even the common people do not willingly travel on foot, and I believe you would nowhere meet fewer people walking than here in the country. Hence you find remarkably few foot-

paths, either across the fields, or by the road side, and in consequence the country looks almost destitute of human beings to one travelling through it. Thus, those who do not travel on horseback, must either travel by postchaise, by mail, or by stage-coach; in any case you travel in a close carriage. The first are very pretty half coaches, holding two; but as they cost as much in proportion as our extra-post are too dear for me. The second is the letter-post, a public undertaking; a very rapid mode of conveyance, and safe, as it has an armed guard; but inconvenient from the smallness of its build, and particularly liable to be upset. The last are something like our travelling-post, but belong to private individuals. In travelling by them you have no further trouble than to take your place in the office for as far as you wish to go; for the proprietor of the coach has at each stage, which are from ten to fifteen English miles at most from each other, relays of horses, which, unless an unusual amount of travelling causes an exception, stand ready harnessed to be put to the coach. Four horses drawing a coach with six persons inside, four on the roof, a sort of conductor beside the coachman, and overladen with luggage, have to get over seven English miles in the hour; and as the coach goes on without ever stopping, except at the principal stages, it is not surprising that you can traverse the whole extent of the country in so few days. But for any length of time this rapid motion is quite too unnatural. You can only get a very piece-meal view of the country from the windows, and with the tremendous speed at which you go can keep no object long in sight; you are unable also to stop at any place.

In a coach of this kind I took my place on Monday morning. I found myself with two females, one of whom looked like a married woman. A good-looking man had accompanied her to the carriage, and said a "*God bless you,*" by way of farewell. The woman's face was red with weeping. The appearance of these women showed that they could not belong to the wealthier classes; but this was proved by their travelling at all in this mode. I could not, however, make up my mind to what class they might belong. That

in the ordinary course of things they were sure to be respectable seemed certain to me; and that was the main thing; for on short excursions I had often found myself in the same coach with creatures of a very different kind. Meanwhile the tears of the first woman dried amazingly fast, and her countenance cleared up instantly. Thus I saw that she was either destitute of deep feeling, or had been only playing a part before. On the road an extremely vulgar shopkeeper's wife got in for a part of the way. In Hertford we picked up another companion, a middle-aged man, who at first seemed to me ill-bred, but he soon gave me a much more favourable impression. I found, to my surprise, a man of rare polish and sociability, well-informed, both by reading and experience, and very witty. His name I did not learn, but we parted at York with a friendly farewell. It is said that the English are a people of few words; this is only so far true, that they would rather sit dumb than drag on a conversation by empty questions like the French. Neither do they speak without consideration. Besides, formulas and formalities play a more important part in English conversation in society than in the French, which is much more unfettered. This conventional politeness I have not as yet been able to acquire, and hence I always feel embarrassed with strangers. My companion possessed it completely, and seemed anxious to make me forget my deficiencies in this respect.

On Monday, as long as daylight lasted, our road, after leaving Middlesex, with its hedges full of trees, and long, low hills, and town-built houses, lay through Hertfordshire, whose not very fertile soil, though rendered fruitful by most skilful culture, yields no profit to the husbandman, and then through barren, heathy Bedfordshire, with its miserable villages. In Northamptonshire, which did not seem much better, nightfall interrupted my observations. In Stamford, the first town in Lincolnshire, I could perceive, by the moonlight, evidences of considerable importance and beauty. The whole country, a rich, level pasture ground, evinced prosperity, and when the daylight afforded a distinct view of

the rich county of Nottingham, my eyes were greeted with such a spectacle of universal rural prosperity as I had never before seen; a multitude of little peasants' cottages, all smiling, built of bricks; here and there a larger and roomier one; every thing finished to the last degree. Probably many foreigners imagine the whole of England like this; but even an unromantic expectation would be disappointed at the sight of the dirty huts and the unfruitful district mentioned before; huts to which I should prefer many a serf's dwelling. But throughout there is not a field on the way unenclosed and wild.

XLVIII.

EDINBURGH, *Saturday, 27th October.*

I arrived here about half-past eleven to-night. The last day's journey, 116 English miles, was the most disagreeable part of the whole way. From early in the morning it was damp and gloomy; in the afternoon it rained heavily. I never saw a more striking contrast than is presented by the two banks of the Tweed. Northumberland was much more beautiful than I expected, although without wood, like all this part of England. Berwick, which is on this side of the river, is in no respect superior to the common towns of poor countries, disgustingly dirty, and immediately beyond the town you enter a wild country, almost entirely destitute of cultivation. This district extends to Dunbar, a distance of eight-and-twenty miles. High hills, bare and dreary, with deep moory valleys, and over all an impenetrable mist. More in my next. I have made acquaintance on the way with a young medical student, from Sheffield, named Moorhouse, and we shall very likely lodge together. The lectures begin on Wednesday. I have seen nothing of the town yet, but now I shall run out. The country is so romantic, that I shall certainly taste new pleasures here. Farewell.

XLIX.

EDINBURGH, *31st October*, 1798.

I have just come back from a round to four of the opening lectures given to-day. An excellent practice has been

established here, of reading an introductory lecture some days before the regular commencement of the course of instruction, which is open to the public, and gives an intelligent hearer a complete notion both of the talents and style of the teacher, and of the views and comprehensiveness with which he will handle his science. This day's specimens have convinced me beyond all doubt that the reputation of this University is fully deserved, and that the Professors here are all I could wish as men of profound insight, thorough mastery over their subjects, and admirable delivery. I cannot say this of all of them; one, Robinson, the Professor of Natural Philosophy, wasted his time with very superficial remarks on the origin and value of the sciences, and further with very unseasonable invectives against modern philosophy. However, we must not be too fastidious, if we want to learn; and the science of natural philosophy possesses sufficient safeguards against the consequences of such defects in the exhibition of its principles; attention and judgment will be able to eliminate extraneous elements; and since no one in England would obtain such a chair without an eminent acquaintance with his science, I shall willingly rank myself among his hearers. The other Professor, whom I can accept as an instructor with unqualified satisfaction, is Dr. Hope, the successor of the venerable Dr. Black, whose advanced age prevents him from continuing his labours. I have never heard or read a more concise, complete, and clear survey of a science than that with which he opened the course on chemistry. He divided it into its different branches as an art and a science, accurately defined its limits, pointed out its special interest, and that which it derived from its application to the various purposes of life and the arts, its uses and abuses, with masterly skill. The two others, Dr. James Home and the celebrated Gregory, I heard accidentally in accompanying my good friend and fellow-lodger, who is studying medicine. The former I judged to be quite a new beginner, both from his own expressions, and the style of his delivery, which was too rapid and timid; he seemed to me, however, an excellent,

correct thinker. The latter, with a venerable mien, and an excellent delivery, seemed, as far as I could judge, quite equal to the reputation which he here enjoys. Casual expressions betrayed a noble mind. So much for this morning's observations, which will give you as good an acquaintance with the university as I possess myself. It has greatly raised my spirits. It strengthens my conviction of the propriety of my decision, and animates me to carry it out with earnestness.

An unexpected circumstance has obliged me somewhat to alter my plan for the employment of my time. Rutherford, Coventry, and Walker, whose lectures on natural history, botany, and agriculture, I expected to hear, give their courses, quite apart from the academical arrangements, during the summer, beginning in May. At first it was a serious vexation to me to hear this, but I soon resolved rather to give up or shorten my travels in the provinces, and, during the winter as well as summer, to give a closer application to a smaller number of subjects. You know, however, that in any case October will remain the latest period for my return.

Edinburgh is incredibly cheap in comparison with London —even cheaper than Copenhagen. I have a very nice apartment, with firing, for seven shillings a week; coals do not cost much here; in summer I shall only have to pay five shillings. The young medical student who lives with me, is an intelligent and honest fellow; we dine together at home, frugally and cheaply. I shall have a sum left now from my allowance for the purchase of books and philosophical instruments. One is not restricted by fashion here as in London. The natives of every class are distinguishable, not to their advantage, by the carelessness of their attire; and the students are as far removed from English neatness as our young men. It has taken my fancy, however, and I mean to keep faithful to it; but I have availed myself of the liberty of wearing my hair plain. In London a hairdresser costs nine guineas a-year. I shall put off the remainder of the account of my journey, the description of Edinburgh, and much besides, till my next.

L.

EDINBURGH, *4th November*, 1798.

. . . To-morrow begin the lectures I mean to attend, and with them, the regular arrangement of my studies; and, if it is possible, the long-intended daily continuation of a letter to you: with the same intent I will employ these hours in giving you a full account of what it makes me happy to think of.

You remember the letter to Francis Scott, the old friend of my father,* and how we reckoned on his reception of me, if he should be still living. I soon learnt where a man of this name resided, and as he was distinguished from the host of men bearing the same name here, by being of higher rank and better known, he seemed to me very likely to be the same person, and although there was still the possibility of a mistake, which would have brought me into a very disagreeable position, I felt an uncommon desire to venture on the step. So, yesterday morning, I walked to the house. While I was in the act of making enquiries to see if it were my man, and was just sending the maid in with my father's letter, on the cover of which several circumstances of his life were mentioned to distinguish him from any other, out came Mrs. Scott, and made me certain at once that it was the very man I sought. She invited me into the parlour in a very friendly way; where, indeed, I did not find him, as he was gone out into the city, but she received me quite cordially without waiting for his return, and promised me that he would be at home to-day between the hours of service. *Nota bene* in passing: there is no nation that can be compared to the Scotch for piety; they not only go to church *every* Sunday, but to both the services; and all, high and low, conclude the day of rest with prayer and singing. At this hour, therefore, I found the venerable white-haired old man; besides himself, his wife, a young lady who seemed to be his daughter, a grown-up young man, and two boys, all

* The elder Niebuhr had known him in Bombay.

evidently his family. They all seemed even to have looked forward to my coming, as if I were an expected friend. The mother greeted me as being already an acquaintance, and the old father received me with the whole fervour of English cordiality, when it is aroused from the depths in which it ordinarily conceals itself in those who have not quite starved it out. He enquired with great earnestness about all that concerned my father; the letter had given him an unhoped-for surprise, for he thought that my father had been long dead. In the course of this conversation, the whole family gradually left the room, and when we found ourselves alone, he began to speak of my objects, and to open his heart to me about the position of a young man at this university. You will readily imagine that these exhortations, which were, and could be only, addressed to my age and its usual characteristics, did not wring my conscience; for, certainly, at my age, it is impossible to be less liable to fall into youthful excesses than I know myself to be; but the noble old man spoke with such a tender anxiety, referred so solemnly to his parental cares, and his trust that he should keep his children's hearts pure, and then concluded with the words, "You are far from your parents and your friends; look upon me as your father, this family as your own; I shall regard you as my own child. However hard you work you will have leisure hours, and need recreation; seek it among us. I am at home myself every evening almost without exception, but if I should be out, my wife will be glad to see you; and if you like music, my daughter plays and sings. My eldest son, who is nearly blind, but an excellent youth, will be happy to go out with you or converse with you." He was so moved that he dried his eyes, and it cost me some trouble to repress my own tears. We shook hands, and I entered in thought a new home.

Say, dearest Amelia, is not this a happiness beyond all possible expectation? What accident could we have fancied probable, that would so instantly have removed all that is suspicious (especially to an English family) in my youth and present position, all that isolates me as a foreigner, all the

insignificance of my obscurity,* and opened connections to me in which my personal sympathy will not be regarded as intrusive, my worth not measured simply as an attentive or intelligent listener; in which sympathy and intercourse may create an enduring bond, and the sight of a happy family present the image of what the future promises to us.

I am without a doubt as to my progress in all the branches of science and cultivation that lie before me; for besides mathematics, astronomy, physics, and chemistry, I wish to pay particular attention to the art of composition.

My connection with my dear fellow inmate, too, takes a more and more brotherly character; and when I have laboured conscientiously, a few hours' conversation with the old man and his children will refresh me and make a new man of me. And then post-day will bring your letter, and perhaps if we remind our friends, I may get something from them besides. So this is my present, and my immediate prospect for the future!

I have only two courses of lectures to attend as yet, one by Dr. Hope, the other by Professor Robinson. The first is excellent. It will give me an opportunity, one way or other, of learning physics, for which I have a great inclination. Playfair has not yet begun the higher mathematics, but will do so on Wednesday; he will be my third tutor. About taking more I hesitate. My understanding counsels me not to lose the advantage of hearing Munroe's anatomy; but my feelings loathe it. Should it be the necessary price of Stewart's and Tytler's society to attend their lectures, I may resolve to pay it; but with them my lectures would mount up to six, and the consequence would be, that my daily hours of study must rise to more than twelve, which seems with me to be the limit, if not of physical strength, at all events of the power of thinking for myself. I have begun to study mathematics by myself with success, and mean to make constant use of the beautiful observatory, which is situated on a rocky hill to the north-east of the city.

* *Thatenlosigkeit*, literally *deedlessness*; the not having yet accomplished any deed worthy to be named.

I promised you, last time, some little account of the pleasant fellow-lodger with whom an unexpected chance has thrown me together. Do not picture him to yourself possessing genius, or with astonishing and comprehensive learning; no, fancy him with the more fortunate endowments of inexhaustible vivacity, unwearied activity, with a careless modesty as regards himself, and yet considerable acquirements in his own department, and a very warm heart. He is a native of Sheffield, a place where the very general, but very equable cultivation of the inhabitants, is particularly favourable to the strengthening of a sound understanding. A striking trait in his character is a too credulous good-nature, which always falls into any cunningly laid snare; and an invincible pertinacity in his good opinion of people whom he has once, although mistakenly, begun to respect. With such a nice fellow, who would not be a warm friend? And I believe we both consider each other as friends already. He is not the only acquaintance I have here among the young men; there is one of his friends whom I will tell you about in my next, only too unlike him in purity of heart. . . .

LI.

12*th November*, 1798.

. . . . In the very first days of our acquaintance, my friend Moorhouse began to speak of an acquaintance of his who had been here some months, but whom he had not yet been able to find out. He was a young man of uncommon genius, and burning with ambition to win a name for himself in literature; with this view it was his intention to visit Germany, to learn our language, and study our literature most thoroughly, and then to introduce it to the English public. This account, of course, made me curious to see him. As soon as my good friend had found him out, he invited him, in the first joy of his heart, and in the persuasion that the acquaintance would be a mutual acquisition, to take a place at our table, and hire a room next to mine; proposals to which the other willingly assented. But in spite of his courteousness, our first conversation gave

me a repugnance to the stranger. I saw in him a man, who in early youth (he is more than a year younger than I) had nipped all virtue in the bud, and trodden it under foot; and cultivated and availed himself of some superficial reading in the French materialistic philosophy, to cast a mantle of system over his weaknesses; merry and humourous, full of incessant contradictions in his thoughts and actions; not without reading, not without cultivation, but as far removed from a thinker, which is the reputation he especially affects, as from any accomplishment in the world. You can fancy that the prospect of having him for a daily companion and a next-door neighbour, was anything but agreeable. He is, indeed, a strange fellow; for instance, horrible expressions and unaccountable behaviour, are followed by asseverations of his good will, and demonstrations of liking and kindness.

The second stranger at our table is an old friend of my fellow-lodger,—a young man, according to his own account, given to excesses; in whom, however, there still remains a love of the noble and beautiful; and as he is an honourable and trustworthy man, he is not personally offensive to me, however much the conversation is so, which prevails among people of such a cast. In England you would seek almost in vain, I think, for the warmth and depth of feeling which characterise our friendships in Germany; isolation is the natural position to a young man, though in individual cases high esteem and veneration may call forth warm expressions of attachment, particularly in absence. I only wait an opportunity to set myself at liberty by unloosing a bond, which, like many others, promising advantage at first, threatens to transform itself into a chain. . . .

23rd. I have seen the Scotts three times since, and their first reception showed such earnest kindness, that it is almost superfluous to say, that with them I look forward to an unchangeable, not an inconstant and capricious friendship. . . .

The strict and rather pedantic piety of the whole family, causes me some embarrassment; still this quality seems to

me truly worthy of respect, particularly in the father; and I wish and intend, as far as I can with sincerity, to conform to the Kirk. I should not like to grieve the old man, and at all events my ideas harmonise much more with his than with those of the English infidels.

LII.

EDINBURGH, 18*th December*, 1798.

The number of vigorous, thinking minds is incontestably much larger in this than in most other countries, but the bonds which hold them together are just as much weaker and slighter. Some exceptions may be made, and (although kindness and friendship cannot properly be said to make an exception when we are speaking of life-giving enthusiasm) not many of our fellow-countrymen, brought up in every-day life, would be capable of feeling and expressing such hearty sympathy and cordiality as Mr. Scott's treatment of me displays. But I have never witnessed, nor heard of family life full of deep and tender affection, nor of a hearty, enthusiastic, mutual confidence between young men. I have, indeed, though very rarely, been told of ardent love between married people, which expressed itself through the deep sorrow felt by the survivor; but even this love led to no results, for in other respects they retained the same indifference to all that appears to us of the highest value. Every young man has a crowd of friends; indeed, any one can have as many as he likes. But this sort of friendship consists simply and solely in a taste for paying each other long and frequent visits, and then killing the time together either in wild excesses, or in sleepy conversation, or boisterous merriment. I have remarked and proved by experience, what, perhaps, will astonish you, that it seems very strange to a young Englishman for a young man to speak of his absent friends with warmth, and to occupy himself with thoughts of them in his solitary leisure hours; and to this void in their hearts and imaginations, perhaps their universal licentiousness may be in great measure ascribed. They are only happy in the

enjoyment of sensual pleasures. They are much more ready and obliging in undertaking trouble for their acquaintance than we usually are; but it is no great merit in them; bodily activity is an enjoyment to them, and they are accustomed to it by their whole education and mode of life. I have sketched this picture from my own experience, and add that it is nevertheless true, that the English, on the average, are worth more than people of a corresponding class whom we see at home; because, in the first place, with the exception of contemptible idlers, they hardly ever are, or like to be, without employment; and secondly, they quickly obtain a practical acquaintance with a subject, because their imagination does not divide and distract their attention by presenting other interesting objects; besides, they would be without a standing or a profession if they were not active in this way, the example of which they see everywhere around them.

Of the female sex I cannot speak from my own knowledge; out of Mr. Scott's family I have not had so much as one long conversation with any lady; I have, however, seen a considerable number, and found them extremely common-place. On the whole, women, though treated with scrupulous politeness, are very little honoured; and few men have any idea that their conversation can be an agreeable recreation. In families where freedom prevails between the young people of both sexes, and is confined within the limits of propriety, (over which a strict watch is kept,) the whole pleasure of their intercourse consists in pert jesting, dancing, and fun, just calculated to please and feed empty-headed frivolity. In parties, the ladies always keep together, and beyond certain prescribed formalities, are treated with perfect indifference; it would excite the greatest attention, if the least interest were perceptible in the conversation of two young people with each other.

I have wandered far from my aim, which was to complain to you how little benefit I derive from the parties, and the extended circle of acquaintance into which the point, consisting of one single family and a few friends, has expanded itself, in spite of my efforts to the contrary.

In other respects, my peace is more secure against disturbance from such sources than it ever was before, and my industry does not flag. My conscience does not make me a single reproach on this point. I hasten to conclude; I leave this letter unwillingly because it gives me the semblance of a talk with you.

LIII.

EDINBURGH, *25th December*, 1788.

. . . . If it were possible to infuse into my friends here, in addition to their many good qualities, somewhat of the higher interest which is so natural to us, I would not complain of the interruptions they cause me; but to that they are dead, and if you can bring them so far as to allow you to speak out of the fulness of your heart, without misunderstanding and misinterpreting you, you are made to feel that you have attained the utmost you can hope for, and need never expect a return on their side. This keeps your relation to them within the same narrow limits which restrict their intimacy with their other friends, and the natural consequence is, that the interest of intercourse must inevitably diminish, unless external circumstances give it, from time to time, a fresh impulse. You must not infer from this that I am growing tired of my acquaintance, and therefore am tempted gradually to forsake them. I visit nowhere habitually, except at the Scotts', and with them I have made it a rule never even to wear the appearance of diminished attachment, because I may find less interest in their conversation. I go there generally about three times a-week, and enter into whatever mode of passing the time they choose, as heartily as I can. Then, too, they really are all so good and amiable, that it is never a task to be lively in their company. The father is a man of remarkably sound, strong understanding, and the mother a refined, sensible, and good woman, although not so free from prejudices by a great deal as the father, who, notwithstanding his decided strictness in religion and politics, never condemns a man for his opinions without knowing him, and possesses in a high degree a large

and enlightened benevolence. Their third son, a boy about fifteen, who serves in the navy, came last week to spend some time at home. He seems to be a lad of good abilities; but they complain that he is too volatile, and he is unhappily liable to convulsive attacks, so that his poor parents must have much secret anxiety; but the laws of conventionalism oblige me to lock up my sympathy with them in my own breast. I thought, at first, I might possibly take some part in the instruction of the younger sons, in order, if possible, to awaken a higher intelligence in them; but delightful as that would be, on closer consideration I found it impracticable. Besides, they have a host of instructors, though scarcely such as they ought to have. Their father seems to do absolutely nothing himself towards their education, and one would feel almost indignant at it, if the contrary were ever heard of in this country. The extent to which boys are left to themselves, and the books they have in their hands, are a subject for just astonishment. Altogether you can have no adequate idea of the carelessness upon every subject, which quickens and nourishes all the germs of corruption till their poisonous weeds take root and shoot up, and you find their consequences meeting you at every step.

I went to the Scotts' yesterday evening, to pass the happy Christmas Eve in some measure as if at home, and hoped I might, perhaps, by joining in the freedom of their festivities, get on a more confidential footing with them. I was disappointed. To-day is to the English, in their own families, something like what yesterday is to us; but it is kept in a very different way, and is more of a family feast. Yesterday is just like other days; and it is a superstitious point of distinction between the Scottish and English Churches, that the former studiously disregard this festival as savouring of Catholicism. Thus I only lost the quiet solitude, the sweetest remembrancer of the many happy anniversaries of this day in years that are past, and some of the vividness with which I should otherwise have called up the prospect of enjoying it with you a year hence.

LIV.

EDINBURGH, *8th January*, 1799.

One difficulty, which even overcomes my natural inclination to take things easily, lies in the multitude of subjects which I have set myself to study and imprint on my memory in a single day, and, with one exception, on every day of the week, rendering a methodical and frugal arrangement of my time absolutely necessary. This in no wise accords with my love of freedom and dislike of restraint. I hope to bring my inclination under control; but with the imperfect mastery we generally obtain over our actions, even after effort, much necessarily remains undone; we sacrifice one thing to another. You know that it was the perception of my need of gaining manly firmness, and ripeness of intellect, together with active energy, which decided me to take this journey. Provided this healthy state of mind be secured, it is not of much consequence whether one branch of abstract knowledge, which can be acquired any where by reflection, comes a little sooner or later into my possession. But I should be unwilling to miss the opportunity of gaining knowledge of a more local character, and I should be ashamed of myself if, possessing and practising a good method of study, I could not learn to observe, to understand, to think, and to write. My attention is much directed to chemistry at present; not that I find much interest in it for its own sake, except as an exercise of ingenuity, but rather because it may be generally useful in application, and because of nothing is it so true, that it must either be understood thoroughly or not at all.

In spite of a good deal of hard work my health is rather improving than giving way. I account for this by the healthy tone of my feelings, which always accompanies the vigorous activity of my intellect, and I try to maintain it by extreme simplicity of diet, and frequent exercise in the open air, which the dry rocky soil renders all the more agreable. The city is surrounded by a wide plain, which is, however, high above the level of the sea; hence the air here is very

pure, though often very keen from the cutting wind. The real mountains are still a long way off; who knows, if I shall be able to get away from here soon enough to climb them? August is the best time for a tour in the Highlands, and it will be impossible for me to leave here before the end of that month. And then the time of my return will be drawing nigh. I wish it could be managed, for nature, when she denied me the vivid delight in soft smiling beauty, gave me a cordial enjoyment of the sublime. You would find yourself as much disappointed in your expectations of the people, as you would rejoice with your whole soul in the majesty of nature. The nation, both in the Highlands and Lowlands, is said to be given to the vice of drunkenness, and the common people not to be one whit better than with us, except that they are very hardy and warlike. The Scotch mountaineers have been savages from time immemorial, and now that civilisation is gradually spreading among them, are necessarily much deteriorating, as all savages do. In order to know them on their favourable side, an acquaintance with their language is necessary, which, in my uncertainty about visiting their country, I must renounce the attempt to acquire, and to which all helps are strangely wanting.

LV.

EDINBURGH, 15*th January*, 1799.

. . . . My days flow on pretty uniformly and simply, without much waste of time in society, but not quite without periods of weariness and exhaustion. Though I am seldom caught in the snare of spirit-killing parties, the interruptions arising from my ordinary intercourse are frequent; and the difference between the English way of thinking and ours is so great, that communication by degrees comes to an end. You know, when we are choosing friends, we cannot help looking for congeniality of views, trying to accommodate ourselves to theirs, and taking interest in their affairs, even when they do not enter into ours with the same warmth. To the last especially I am naturally inclined; but it is not

possible for me to sympathise with my acquaintance in all their concerns. You know that there is a great want of this congeniality, even in the family where in other respects there is so much that invites me to consider myself as one of themselves. There is nothing artificial about them; that is a great point: but genuine life, interest in the noblest subjects, is wanting also, and has given way to a narrow circle of blindly received, and invincible prejudices; they have so adapted themselves to the world as it goes (and you would find the same every where here), that when its evils force themselves upon them, nothing is so far from their thoughts as that the origin of these may be among the things to which they are themselves accustomed; they rather imagine that they must arise from some change or innovation in the order of things, which is essentially bad. So, likewise, authorities are every where here the most dangerous opponents, and independent thought is a stranger to all parties. Hence, in such circles, you may perhaps enjoy yourself sometimes, but you never receive a fresh impulse from them, and you must either get this from within, or go on for a time in the ordinary track. . . . .

Whatever may be my vocation in life, assuredly nothing can be more essential to the soundness of the understanding than a close and accurate insight into the great scenes of nature. Our mind is in a sickly state when we prefer to her any work of human hands or human tongues, or confine our interest to those spots which have been illustrated by human actions.

Germany as the province of the scholar, becomes dearer to me in a foreign country, although I am reminded at every step in how deep a slumber we, as a nation, are sunk. A close acquaintance with the English literature yields me a full conviction that, at the present moment, we may claim a decided superiority in almost every branch of letters, and this superiority is candidly confessed by many, especially amongst the more distinguished of the younger men, and even by some older scholars. In this place especially a great number are learning German. It must be confessed,

however, that most singular prejudices prevail against our country.

Formerly our learned men were regarded as very slow, narrow-minded fellows; now people are inclined to pronounce them very clever men, but to look upon them as so many conspirators against the peace of the world; an opinion that is adopted in a still more incomprehensible manner by some young profligates, and excites their delight as much as it does the abhorrence of other people. One of these asked me with great astonishment, "Are you speaking seriously? We thought that the German men of letters were, without exception, atheists, and we admire you on that account." All we want in order to measure ourselves, as far as it is good to do so, with these Britons, is to be more active, observant, and apt in seizing hold of the right moment.

In the awakening of such a spirit I would gladly co-operate, and the plan of uniting all our friends in the same object has afforded me some pleasant day-dreams.

LVI.

EDINBURGH, 11*th February*, 1799.

I have made the acquaintance lately of two persons who read German. In no place in England is there so much attention paid to German literature as here, and the number of those who know enough of German to read a little, and to procure books in our language, is not inconsiderable, but they only know such works as accident throws in their way. Kant's name is already very well known here; this is owing to various Germans, who, with unequal capabilities, have taken upon themselves the apostolic office. His works are in the hands of several scholars of this town, and an Englishman has begun a translation of them, which he carried to a considerable length, but then got tired of the work.

But the representations of his philosophy are curiously confused, and, unless I am very much deceived, it will never take root here. Among the young men there are several who mutually compliment each other with the name of

metaphysicians; but this class consists exclusively of mere empty praters, who have borrowed their fine attire from books, and are incapable of any true investigation. Their ideas are in such confusion that any development or elucidation by conversation is out of the question; their results are detestable; and their empty self-complacency contemptible. Last week I could not avoid attending a breakfast where several of this sort were present, and Kant was referred to (which is the reason of my speaking of him here); it was a meeting which irritated and vexed me to such an extent that it almost made me ill. I had seen enough long before to be persuaded, and this meeting fully convinced me, that the praise which Jacobi accords to the philosophical spirit of the English nation is quite undeserved, and founded on ignorance. Those works, the neglect of which he reckoned as a great honour to the English nation, which with us are now forgotten, and have lost their authority,—the disgusting sophistries of the French school of thirty years ago and more,—are the chosen food of the daily increasing class of which I speak; they are extending in circulation, and are even to be found in circulating libraries in the country, and the cast of thought that results from their influence only awaits political commotions to become dominant in the nation. . . . .

LVII.

EDINBURGH, 26*th February*, 1799.

. . . . I have written nothing to you as yet about English literature. The reason is, that I do not see the new works. There are no reading rooms here as there are in Paris, or even in Copenhagen, in which travellers can meet with new books, and pamphlets, and literary periodicals.

My hope of finding something analogous among the booksellers, whose shops are a meeting-place for acquaintance here, is disappointed; for there is nothing but gossiping in them; and the publisher to whom Scott specially introduced me, does not seem to have made his arrangements at all with a view of enabling one to hear of new works, but rather in

fact to neglect modern productions for older literature. But among all the new publications that have appeared during the last eight months, and fallen in my way, there is nothing much worthy of notice, except a voyage round the world. The English seem, in fact, to have no great author at present, not one whose words they wait for with eager anticipation, and can dwell on with love and enthusiasm. They have a good number of useful authors in the departments of mathematics and natural science. Philosophy is quite at a stand-still; and among the writers I have referred to, there is not one of brilliant and commanding genius. There are many who write history, but the best of them do not rise above mediocrity. Still, on this and kindred topics, many points of interest are brought to light, which is to be ascribed, in great measure, to the peculiar position of this country, as containing within itself much with which the rest of Europe has no connexion. Taste is at a very low ebb. The public devour and admire translations of all the unnatural and marvellous tales and satires of our German dramatists and romancers; and the original works most widely read are of the same cast. Schiller is the most admired German poet. Even among the political writings, for which England has always been so famous, nothing appears that excites, much less that deserves attention. One work, however, I would recommend to you; at least the notices of it have raised my expectations very high. It is a work on education by a lady of middle age, who has been occupied in the education of members of her own family for twenty years. I have never seen a work on this subject which displays a sounder judgment, more unprejudiced views, and more penetrating observation, than this of Miss Edgeworth's, judging by the extracts from it that I have read.

LVIII.

EDINBURGH, *7th May*, 1799.

. . . . Scotland stands, far and wide, in high repute for piety, and has done so from the commencement of the Refor-

mation. The clergy in general are not good for much; that is allowed by every one who knows the country. The piety of the people is, for the most part, mere eye-service—an accustomed formality without any influence on their mode of thinking and acting. They say prayers learned by rote at their meals, even before and after tea; they observe all the ordinances of their Church, and consign Infidels, Deists, and Atheists to perdition, with the pride of a soul that knows heaven to be its own exclusive privilege. In short, I no longer blame Hume for judging the Presbyterians, in Charles the First's time, with harshness and scorn. I expected austerity among them; I find only rusticity.

I live in such a house as I have described to you as an ordinary burgher's house; in a sunny spacious room. My host is a carpenter. He and his wife have many of the usual vices of the common people here. They are lazy, avaricious, unsociable; but withal, less dirty than most persons of their class. In the same house with me, a story higher, lives an ironmonger, to whom Moorhouse had an introduction from some tradespeople in Sheffield, the seat of the hardware manufacture. This man, who is in humble circumstances, and uneducated, has always shown himself well-meaning and honest; he is a widower, and has several children, some of them scarcely grown up yet, who are all very well disposed. Although without a mother, they seem to keep their father's house in excellent order, and to be happy and industrious. Music is their only accomplishment. The nation has a peculiar taste and remarkable skill in this art, and the many and sweet national songs exercise and cherish the talent from which they have sprung. I have spent many a pleasant hour in listening to the singing of these good children, and always found myself a welcome visitor. This family are much more rigid in their piety than those who belong to the Established Church; they are Baptists, and have retained the most extravagant notions of the fanatics of the last century in matters of austerity. To go to the theatre, to dance, to read worldly books, are all alike inexpiable crimes. Where education and habitual culture of the nobler faculties

cannot exist, such a way of thinking pleases me much more than the opposite, that of the people who give themselves up entirely to amusement. They look upon me as a great scholar, and, very likely, as an unbeliever. . . . .

LIX.

EDINBURGH, *4th June*, 1799.

. . . . This journey has perhaps made me a more competent man of business than I had previously thought myself capable of becoming.

From my ignorance of the internal economy of the state, and the various branches of industry that sustain its vitality, the details of public business often used to seem to me quite unintelligible, and always unconnected; but as employments of this kind acquire a meaning to me, they lose their unpleasantness, and I have to contend less with the periodical inclination to indolence which it so often requires intense exertion of will to overcome; and as I have more knowledge of the subjects to which a statesman has to direct his attention (though heaven knows what may be my peculiar department) than many of those to whose hands they are committed either have, or have any idea of obtaining, the consciousness that I do not hold a post for which I am unfit, by mere favour, will give me redoubled spirit and energy. I intend besides to avail myself diligently of the learned institutions which Copenhagen possesses. There are some splendid mineralogical collections there, and I shall try to master this interesting and important branch of natural history. And if we believe that Providence disposes the events of our life with a reference to the same ends that appear to us important in earthly plans, we may regard the postponement of an appointment in the university as a respite allowed me in which to make up for past neglect. If nothing unexpected occur, therefore, we must, and ought to look upon our future fate as settled, at least for a good while to come. Our position in Copenhagen will certainly be, in many respects, a difficult and delicate one. But formerly other circumstances, as you know, embittered my residence there, which we shall

now be able to obviate. I shall now be capable of fulfilling all duties of ceremony, and your silent admonition will arm me with energy to persevere in the cultivation of my own powers. I could wish that some happy idea may be awakened within me some day, which, when developed, might grow into a noble, beautiful, and enduring, intellectual work. I would this were possible. Works on the so-called exact sciences, even if I should advance so far, could not, from the measure of my powers, and the present state of these sciences, ever become anything of this kind. Philosophy? He who presumes to raise his voice on this subject, without having the clearest vocation, will do little good thereby. History? Its worth and importance may appear problematical; and besides I see with sorrow that, owing to the inadequacy of our knowledge, chiefly caused by the ignorance and incapacity of those who had it in their power to have furnished to us the materials of history, it is almost impossible to carry out anything like the comprehensive and magnificent plan with which my mind has long been occupied. Thus my prospects of authorship are very limited. . . . .

I read lately the biography of a very singular man, a Mr. Taylor of London, whom I may perhaps have mentioned to you before; for, though I never saw him, everything that is said of him interests me as if I had known him. There is something fearful about his history and character, that makes one half afraid to seek his acquaintance. He grew up and passed his life under very unfavourable circumstances. Through a singular philosophical mysticism derived from the Platonists, he became an orthodox polytheist, and adherent of the mystical interpretation of the popular religion of the Greeks; a kind of insanity which manifests itself with a strange sublimity in his translations of the Greek philosophers, and his own writings, especially his poems. Well, this man made his choice in his earliest youth; and the maiden who won the first and only love of the boy, became the wife of the youth, when her parents wanted to force her into a rich marriage. During more than a year they had only seven English shillings a week, which he earned by

copying. And although their circumstances somewhat improved, poverty was their companion during many after years. Yet their spirit was not broken. Taylor had much self-will, but, at the same time, much fortitude. But I blessed our fate that we were not born in this country. A similar lot would very likely have awaited us; for the crime of not being rich can only be atoned for here by the striving to become so; and he who tries to live for his genius without this effort, if not pensioned by some great man or by government, in which case he must renounce his independence and his pride, will sink, heaven knows where! I should like to bring the best writings of this extraordinary man for our Moltkes.

On Saturday I think of going into Fifeshire to visit a very interesting landed proprietor who has given me a most friendly invitation. . . . .

LX.

EDINBURGH, 10*th June*, 1799.

. . . . Among the acquaintance in Copenhagen who will probably visit us, dearest Amelia, the people we are wont to call *interesting* will form a class by themselves. They are generally the most agreeable in conversation, and yet not those whom you would take to your heart. Men of the world, although intellectual and polished, often lose *themselves* entirely, and remain a mere brilliant form without heart and soul, and cold as death. I have often suffered myself to be too much carried away by the graceful qualities of such persons, and cultivated acquaintanceships of this kind more than was wise, and more than I could persevere in. Such characters are the production of capitals and courts, and will scarcely, if ever, be found beyond their precincts. It was my fate that such men always showed a particular liking for me; and that I, in return, felt more attracted towards them than to any other acquaintance, because they could far excel every other sort of men in that animated flow of conversation, which is of all pleasures the greatest to me. For in all artificial relationships, where the barriers that

divide you are not removed by personal attachment and community of interest, and the immediate concerns of each must remain unapproached, the degree of pleasure to be found in intercourse must depend upon the vivacity of mind and the individuality exhibited by each; and the colder, more general, and more common-place our conversation, the more indifferent we must be to each other. To you, who are more used to solitude, and so implacably averse to frivolity, perhaps such intercourse may be burdensome. But you need not stand in fear of it, dearest Amelia. Neither our inclinations nor our opinions will ever bring discord between us; and, in such matters, yours will be a law to me.

LXI.

EDINBURGH, 17*th June*, 1799.

. . . . I reckon it among the most important results of my travels, that the indifference with which I was in the habit of regarding the objects of nature around me has given way. It was a defect naturally connected with my short-sightedness; but it constantly grew upon me, through the dreamy forgetfulness of reality in which from my childhood I was allowed to indulge. As you know, I sometimes pondered over it; but, without a change in my circumstances, I could hardly have succeeded in overcoming it. This indifference has now vanished. For some time past I have taken a lively interest in mineralogy, and in fact it is this branch of natural history which has brought the others also into favour with me. This interest is in great measure owing to the nature of the country, just as the opposite character of the land in which we live must produce the opposite feelings.

I have always, when I have had occasion to allude to Playfair, spoken of him with the sincere respect, with which his distinguished merit, and upright character, have inspired me from the first. But now it is long since you have seen any mention of him, and it has been with him as formerly with other men of high standing, for whom I had a real deference and veneration, but from whom I expected no indulgence, supposing them to entertain too high an opinion

of my talents, yet one not excited by affection, just as it was, a year and a half ago, with the good old Hegewisch—that is, my respect was mingled with a certain degree of dread. I felt I could not come up to my own expectations, much less to his. Thus it came to pass that I seldom saw him. By accident, however, I found myself alone with him a few days ago. In the course of our conversation, we touched upon mineralogy. He offered to take a walk with me some evening soon, round the rocks on the east side of the city, which are very remarkable. He kept his word. We walked about under the steep, time-worn walls of the cliffs, and he propounded his theory of their primitive origin and nature, and of the character and composition of the different kinds of rock. It was one of the most instructive and agreeable evenings I have enjoyed this year. Unfortunately, he is going to England before long.

My little excursion is put off till next Saturday.

LXII.

EDINBURGH, *2nd July*, 1799.

I wanted to write to you on the anniversary of our last parting, but was reluctantly compelled to yield to an invitation, where the insipidityof the conversation only gave me a sense of emptiness and desolation, after which I went to the Scott's, hoping to be refreshed by their greater cordiality. I went there with the wish and hope of pouring out my feelings for once about what lay nearest to my heart. Ever since I have written to you about this kind-hearted family, however, I have complained to you of their reserve as to those communications in which the heart expands. It is quite a national trait not to dwell upon what concerns us personally, upon what fills our heart; and it is as unnatural to them to hear me speak of the topics upon which I am feeling strongly, as it would be to do the same themselves. How I shall bless the time when this constraint will be over,—when in my own land, with you and our friends, even by virtue of our national usages, I shall listen to the joys and sorrows of others, not

as a mere piece of news, but as a communication to which I have a right, and be as sure of a welcome when I lay open my own heart! I am far from attributing it to coldness in these good people. It is altogether national, and it is the same with every one I have known here, whatever their rank or calling, learning, or sex. Hence, also, tediousness is seldom utterly banished from social intercourse. It has quite surprised me, for example, that if you meet a person in whose family some one has been taken ill, he will hardly allude to it, beyond a short answer to your inquiries, or speak of it with any feeling. In this way, it must be allowed, people may easily be independent of each other. I believe firmly that the Scotts love their children,—that Playfair is a good father; and yet the former only speak of them because they have them with them in the evenings (which is saying much here), and the boys themselves make their presence known; the latter behaves exactly as if his boy were not in the room. So far from inviting me to speak of my connexions, so far from Mr. Scott making any inquiries as to my father's position (though he is nevertheless as much attached to him as possible), they have met every attempt on my part to talk to them upon these subjects, with a silence, which admits of no other explanation, than that it is not in good taste to say much about such things. They have never once asked after my mother and sister! My friends I have only been able to mention in so far as they are connected with literature; for example, Jacobi. Though probably good Mrs. Scott may see danger to religion and the church in all such philosophical personages.

LXIII.

EDINBURGH, 10*th August*, 1799.

I must really now begin to tell you what I have been doing with myself since I last wrote; how I came to leave Edinburgh, what I was about in the country when I wrote to you, and how it happens that I am here again. I cannot give you all the details now, but will send you all the missing particulars in my next.

I was very unwell the day before C.'s lectures concluded, and the day itself. In this condition I went to the lecture, with which my whole connexion with the University is brought to a close. He hastened to conclude, as I had expected. I waited to the end in order at last to bind the Proteus to an interview. I went up to him, and we got into conversation. He said he was on the point of going to his little estate, and asked me to accompany him. A more inviting opportunity could not have offered, for it is difficult to get hold of him. There is quite a swarm of acquaintance and visitors round him, for he has the dangerous merit of making himself interesting to his friends. On the road, and in the country, I could have him to myself. He only spoke of a few days, and this accorded with my wishes. We had very stormy weather on our journey. The occasion of his trip was a fair in the town of Kinross. His country-house is a little old cottage, which has been enlarged from time to time; small and neat. Unhappily, some one was there already waiting for him, and thus our first evening was almost lost. I comforted myself with thinking of the next day, when I could ride with him to the town, and then on our return be with him for some days.

At breakfast time, C. began to beg me to await his return here; he should be back in one or two days, and meanwhile I could make myself acquainted with the arrangements of his farm, as I had often expressed a wish to do. Besides, he would give me an introduction, of which I could avail myself during his absence, to a landed proprietor in the neighbourhood, who had the direction of some interesting works. I should have enough to learn; and besides, there were plenty of books for me. One easily believes what one wishes. I staid behind. At first I enjoyed my solitude very much. I sauntered about, read a good deal, indulged in my own thoughts, looked about me, observed much; the children were my society, and it gave me pleasure to be able to win their love with the trifles which attract at their innocent age. The poor children had lost their mother, of whom her friends speak in unusually high terms. Her remembrance, too, lives undimmed in his heart. But though these

poor children are left very much to themselves, it is delightful to see how kind and loving they are with each other.

The weather had now become a downright tempest, and it was impossible to quit the house. Meanwhile, day after day passed, and my friend did not come. My patience and good temper gave way. I knew C. too well to ascribe it to an intentional slight on his part. When the weather cleared, I found that the gentleman to whom he had recommended me, was no longer at home.

At length, yesterday, I came back in an ill humour. My first errand was to my truant friend. I have not room to tell you to-day how he came to break his word. I do not love him the less for it. Our interview was full of emotion.

LXIV.

EDINBURGH, 13*th August*, 1799.

. . . . I will not put off telling you what prevented C. from fulfilling his promise. It is really an unhappy affair,—an approaching marriage, not as yet made public, which he has resolved on against his inclination, in order to provide care and education for his children. He told me this candidly himself. I should tremble for the consequences, were not the poor women here so accustomed to neglect, that no doubt his wife will expect nothing beyond respect. Attention she certainly will not receive. Amusement, and everything that can fan the flame of his temperament, is a necessary to him, and thereby he trifles away a great part of the respect (for every one that knows him must love him), which is really his due. Still I assure you that he is one of the most eminent and best men I know here, only he should not have been born in this country.

LXV.

BOLTON IN EAST LOTHIAN, 19*th August*, 1799.

. . . . This last week has already brought with it more pleasure than the monotonous months I spent in the city. The rare enjoyment of finding my expectations surpassed, and, what is far more, the simple heartiness with which

I was received by people, with whom I could exchange respect in the first hour, has given me quite a new view of the nation, and a liking for it, which nothing before had called out. I can now return with the conviction of having obtained a really correct view of the country, and with a just and cordial love of its inhabitants. . . .

LXVI.

DOUGLAS, *Tuesday.*

I was interrupted yesterday evening by the household arrangements of my good hosts. . . . .

In Haddington, the chief town of this county, Mr. Stevenson, the acquaintance I have before mentioned to you, was waiting for me, in order to conduct me to the son of the man in whose house he had passed a year to learn farming. I expected to see a sturdy, jolly-looking rustic; I was half-abashed when a mild, refined young man entered the room, whose manners would have qualified him to appear in the most polished circles. We, of the book-world, are apt to fancy that a farmer or an artist will not pay much attention to us, if we seem inclined to meddle with the details of his calling, but probably only laugh at us in his sleeve. Mr. Adam Bogun testified by his whole behaviour that he felt otherwise, and was sincerely glad to see his unusual visitor. A German tourist was to him as new an object, as a farmer from the most highly cultivated district in Scotland was to me. I soon conceived a warm interest in him, and felt convinced that he would grudge no pains to oblige me. Pleasure beamed in his countenance when he was able to show me a kindness, when he saw that he had given me a pleasure, or that I took an interest in his circumstances and his family; and when we parted, the tears stood in his eyes. As the weather on Saturday was so boisterous that travelling was out of the question, I willingly remained with him. Before the morning was over, we were no longer strangers, and we sat together alone by the fire, which the horrible weather rendered necessary, chatting so familiarly, or employing ourselves with so little restraint, that my spirits were not cast down by the gloomy prospect of having to

make my tour in such weather. As acquaintanceship in the country does not proceed at such a sleepy pace as in the town, where you have only too much of it, the weather did not prevent a neighbour from coming to spend the evening, though he lived a mile off. He was likewise an excellent young man, and had more education than my other young friend; had seen more of the world too; but he was such a fanatic in politics, that for several years he had forgotten his own business, and even now injures his peace and character with his foolish notions. I must pass over the Sunday that I spent in his house (for the weather still prevented me from continuing my journey), where I met a curious adventurer, whose loquacity overpowered us all; but did not prevent my accepting his invitation to call upon him. On Monday I went with my worthy young friend Bogun to see his father. The old man had risen by his own exertions, from a very humble origin to considerable opulence. His manners are still pretty much those of the class to which he at first belonged, but with all their excellences, and natural good breeding characterized his family. A very different reception awaited me at the house of a man of noble birth, a Mr. Buchan Hepburn, to whom I had a letter of high recommendation. Whether it was that he looked down on my companion, Bogun, and therefore on me, or that he did not choose to insult with our presence a party of noble guests whom he had invited to dinner, he began immediately to tell us in very plain terms that he had scarcely any time to spare for us, on account of this party; he would show us his fields, but must hurry through them. I hastened away from him, taking leave of Bogun also, to Sir John Murray, of Kirkland's Hill, a country gentleman to whom Mr. Scott had given me an introduction. I was received by a cheerful, healthy-looking, elderly man, in a room filled with books and papers, so that it looked like the study of a scholar. He left me in no doubt that he placed full faith in his friend's recommendation. He conducted me to his family, who were assembled in a very handsome dining-room; a mother, and four daughters, very

near in age, the youngest a child who had done growing, the eldest just attained to the gravity of womanhood. I told them at once of the reception I had previously met with, which did not surprise them, but they strove with all zeal to make amends for it, and we soon got into a very animated and familiar conversation.

I have told you how very much the two sexes keep at a distance from each other in this country, when they meet in parties in the towns, and how scrupulously every appearance of intimacy is avoided. Here, German manners were in fashion, and the young ladies were as artlessly friendly as if they had learnt of you and your sisters, that it is a narrow-minded prejudice to refuse ordinary confidence, and marks of sympathy in conversation, because a stranger happens to be a man. Only one of the number was good-looking. Beauty is extremely rare in Scotland. This one and the eldest displayed much intelligence and a careful education. What their father has accomplished on his farm exceeded everything that I have yet seen. I had never met with any garden so carefully tended, so well laid out, or so cleverly managed. All this has been done without the prospect of bequeathing it to his children, and for an avaricious landlord. He had raised the produce of his fields four-fold in thirteen years, brought every thing from a neglected condition to the highest cultivation, planted hedges, diked in a strip of land, and has now only got to keep it up to its present state. His lease is for thirty years. He has brought up his two sons to agriculture; put one in charge of two outlying farms, and the other is learning under his own eye. They are all very busy in their home duties, and happy with each other. They would all please you, even the somewhat rough mother; for if she transgresses the rules of polished society, she does it with so much good-humour that you can only laugh. She smokes her pipe, laughs at it herself, but is not ashamed of it, for as she says, "it is no sin," and seems to enjoy existence more than most people. I meant to have left the next day, but I staid. We parted with the promise to meet again. Against that time Murray will write out a set of rules and

experiments for me, and engaged me in return to write him an account of our methods of agriculture, at some future period. I have really learnt much more of these matters than you would suppose. I am quite familiar with the agricultural economy of Scotland, and I am convinced that I should be able to apply what I have learnt on another soil. By the end of next week I shall be in Edinburgh again.

LXVII.[*]

EDINBURGH, 31*st August*, 1799.

. . . . It would scarcely be possible, perhaps, for a large agricultural population to earn for themselves a more respectable character in their calling, than that which belongs to most of the inhabitants of the district through which I travelled. True insight into their business, activity, intelligence, and an unblemished reputation are the characteristics, I really believe, of the greater number of the farmers; and many of them possess a number of very good books, are fond of reading, and speak as well as the townsfolk (the Scotch, indeed, in general, do not speak well). Public-houses, or hotels, in which our country people degrade themselves, are only to be found in the widely separated villages, or in towns. For the villages are almost every where broken up, and this of itself keeps the labourers from social excesses, as they live round the farmstead in little cottages, consisting of one room, which is at once their cooking, living, and sleeping room. The object of their aspiration is to possess the reputation, the manners, and the comforts of a respectable station. They spend a great deal upon their houses, and often upon their gardens, however short a time they have them in their possession.

If I were a landlord here, I should not make much profit, for it seems to me an unjustifiable thing to drive away such people, by over-exaction, from the soil which they have done so much to improve and embellish; and it has excited my indignation to see that this is not at all taken into account. Certainly one would be far from desiring that a whole nation should resemble them, or seriously wishing to take up one's

abode among them. Still the first might not be so bad after all, and as to the latter, we should only find in the long run, that we had not chosen the better part, if we adopted their tone in all things. The number of their ideas is limited, and it is inevitable but that many things should be perfectly indifferent to them, which stir our whole hearts; that they should have an inordinate amount of phlegm. I even feel myself that my stay here, and my occupation with the things of daily life, has made me liable to the contagion, and therefore should not wish to be the associate of these very worthy men for any length of time. Perhaps it has done me a little harm already; perhaps it is with the dwelling on the things of common life, as with the composition of the air that we breathe, the life-giving part of which, when pure, seems to be only fit for another world, and would consume our life here.

LXVIII.

AFTER HIS RETURN FROM ENGLAND.

TO AMELIA.

COPENHAGEN, 18*th April*, 1800.

. . . . Schimmelman and others will see that a suitable salary is attached to the places they are endeavouring to get for me. Every thing is dear, certainly, very dear, but I am in no anxiety. We both like a simple way of life, and do not seek or require amusements. Shelter, food, fire, clothing, and joyful love will make our all. We shall enjoy a fine day in the fields as much as in a country house. Sophocles and Homer will be our substitute for the theatre; and the absence of visitors will not bring, but prevent weariness and *ennui*. The Reventlows, Bernstorff, the Rantzaus, the Kunzens, the Desaugiers are all very friendly.

LXIX.

26*th April*, 1800.

. . . . My darling Amelia, I rejoice in my good fortune with feelings which are not unworthy of your love. It is now, not only a duty, but my most pressing necessity, to keep all my

powers on the stretch here, (where there are so many examples to lure me to indolence of mind and lukewarmness of heart,) and to walk circumspectly along the brink of the precipice. I bless the æra that will end this busy yet unsettled life. Idleness and aimless occupation will henceforth be no longer possible, and with my intellect calm and strong,—with the consciousness of capacity for action, and of being equal to my own requirements,—that sense of life, on whose intensity depends the practice of all that is right and noble, will awake once more with youthful vigour. A consciousness of love and warmth will be shed over each moment, that will make toil a pleasure. A life in the spirit; the only life in which I can be quite happy, but in which I may be more so than most.

LXX.

29th April, 1800.

. . . . Many considerations have been suggested to me by what you tell me about the relation between parents and children, in certain families of your acquaintance. What a glorious thing is that true equality, when it is unbroken by pride, self-erected barriers, and the love of ruling on the one side! It might so well subsist between parents and children, and then their mutual relation would rest on a sure and lasting basis. But, generally, parents are more inclined to make their children minister to their own vanity, than to be moderate in their demands upon them, to keep them unexacting on their side, and, if possible, inspire a sense of their own superiority, without attempting to keep their children under undue restraint.

As regards our affairs, our income will be very limited at first; but afterwards it will depend on my own exertions to make it an ample one. The Duke of Augustenburg has already expressed to Schimmelman his intention of offering me the Greek professorship if it should fall vacant. But, as far as money is concerned, the prospects are better in public life. However, we will not trouble ourselves with these considerations at present. We will content ourselves with

our lot, and not suffer ourselves to be disturbed by the fears, which Baggesen and others of my acquaintance think to excite, when they say that it is impossible to live here under 1500 thalers a year.* I am quite convinced that we shall be able to manage. Do not fear that I shall suffer myself to be alarmed by the complaints and apprehensions which I have so often to listen to from others. I know what will make us happy, and what we can renounce without a painful effort, or longing wishes. Where love is the animating principle there are no dark moments of this kind. I look at our dear Moltkes in the beginning of their married life. . . . .

* Equal to about 255*l.*

CHAPTER V.

NIEBUHR'S MARRIAGE AND OFFICIAL LIFE IN COPENHAGEN FROM 1800 TO 1806.

In May, 1800, Niebuhr returned to Holstein and married; in June he took his wife to Copenhagen, and entered on his double official duties on the 1st of July.

The young couple were in the highest degree happy in each other. Niebuhr writes thus to Madame Hensler in the month of August: "Amelia's heavenly disposition, and more than earthly love, raise me above this world, and, as it were, separate me from this life.

"A life of full employment, combined with serenity of mind, which we shall secure by rigidly maintaining our seclusion, protects and heightens the capacity for happiness. Happiness is a poor word: find a better! Even the toils and sacrifices of business contribute to the calm self-approval, which to me is the essential condition of enduring happiness. Amelia's cheerfulness, her contentment with her lot, untroubled by any wish for something beyond it, afford me as heartfelt joy as the contrary would give me pain. Her presence and conversation keep my heart at rest and my mind healthy. Thus I am gradually recovering from the impression made upon me in past times by the delusions and contradictions of the world."

Harmonizing in all their tastes, their lives flowed on calmly and quietly; they occasionally mixed in fashionable society at the houses of Count Schimmelman, and a few others, but beyond that only joined in small parties of intimate friends. When Niebuhr was not engaged in his official duties, he returned to his favourite classic authors. His wife entered warmly into all that interested him. In the evenings he often related stories to her from the ancient writers, or read aloud to her, or looked over with her what he had himself been writing.

In the autumn of the same year, the University of Kiel offered him a professorship. He declined it for the present; partly because he thought it would be ungrateful to Schimmelman to resign his situation so soon; partly because he feared it would be regarded as an unbecoming mark of partiality if he were thus preferred to older men; partly because he really enjoyed many branches of his present occupation. He saw that he was of use, and his merits were recognized by his superiors.

In September he heard through Madame Hensler of F. Leopold Stolberg's conversion to Catholicism, which caused so much excitement in the circle of his friends. The purity of Stolberg's motives for this change is beyond a doubt. His natural cast of mind was deeply pious. The rationalism, which prevailed at that time in the Protestant Church of Germany, shocked and pained him to the last degree; and, believing that there existed no elements of regeneration within its pale, he threw himself into the arms of a church, which

at least afforded more satisfaction to his devotional feelings. By this step he not only sacrificed many advantages for his family, but lost the friendship of several of those to whom he was most warmly attached, especially Voss and Jacobi, who carried their expressions of censure to actual bitterness. Voss in particular continued his attacks upon him for many years; so late as 1817 he published a pamphlet entitled, "Wie F. L. Stolberg unfrei geworden ist."* Niebuhr did not justify Stolberg's change; it grieved him deeply; he regarded it as the aberration of a tendency in itself beautiful and noble; but he was able to transport himself into Stolberg's point of view, and was convinced that no unworthy motive could have actuated him, which alone would have warranted the harsh treatment he received from many of his friends. Therefore, much as Niebuhr was attached to Voss and Jacobi, he could not at all approve of their conduct in this instance, which was indeed often a source of regret to him, the more so as the form of Catholicism which Stolberg had adopted by no means rendered him illiberal towards his Protestant friends, nor detached his sympathies from the sincerely pious among them.

Niebuhr was intending at this time to take up the study of Grecian history in his leisure hours, and write an account of the various constitutions among the Greeks. This was a design he had cherished for many years, indeed almost from his boyhood. But his studies were to some extent interrupted by the ill health of his wife, who suffered long and severely from a complaint

* How F. L. Stolberg became a slave.

in the eyes, during which time most of his leisure hours were spent in trying to amuse her. They passed this winter with no other drawback to their quiet and peaceful enjoyment of life's purest pleasures. But the spring of 1801 brought with it threatening storms.

It is well known how deeply the English government considered itself aggrieved by the armed neutrality of the northern powers of Europe,—how acts of hostility were practised on the Danish vessels, and even on the colonies, without any formal declaration of war, and how at last, in March, 1801, Nelson and Parker appeared in the Sound, and proclaimed war at the moment of attack. Niebuhr watched the gradual approach of this calamity, and witnessed the attack and the bombardment. His feelings on this occasion, and the intensity of his sympathies, will be seen by the extracts from his letters to Madame Hensler. After this mournful episode, this year elapsed without any alteration in Niebuhr's circumstances and occupations. In the summer of 1802, he and his wife visited their friends in Holstein, who all rejoiced to see the happiness and serenity which beamed in his looks. He performed the duties of his office with ease, pleasure, and success; the sciences were a recreation to him in his leisure hours, and the cheerfulness and affection of his wife afforded a satisfaction and repose to his heart, which made it impossible for gloom or vexation to take any lasting hold on him, although with the great sensitiveness of his nature he could not always avoid passing annoyances.

During the winter of 1802-3, Niebuhr studied

Arabic with great zeal, and surprised his father on his birthday with the translation of a part of Elwakidi's History of the Conquest of Asia under the first Kaliphs, from a manuscript in the library of Copenhagen. As he soon after became engaged in new and more extended official occupations, time failed him for the continuance of this work, but he did not relinquish the intention of completing it, for many years, and preserved the manuscript with that view. He also gave several lessons a week during this winter, (for which he received no remuneration,) on historical and philological subjects, to a nephew of Count Schimmelman's, and two other young men, sons of his acquaintance.

In the spring of 1802, he was sent by the Danish government into Germany, to transact some financial business which obliged him to visit Hamburgh, Leipsic, Frankfort, and Cassel. His wife accompanied him. On their way home they spent some weeks in Holstein.

On Niebuhr's return to Copenhagen, Count Schimmelman informed him that he was destined to a more important office. He thus alludes to the subject in a letter to Madame Hensler, written in October: "On my return, I heard from Count Schimmelman news of some importance to me. My colleague at the Board of Trade is going to resign his post, and his duties are to be transferred to me, but without any alteration of my title or salary. . . . My work will be considerably augmented by it, which I am glad of, for it is a well-ascertained fact, that the ability to work grows with the number of things one has to get through. I do not fear that it will prevent me, at least in the long run,

from pursuing those studies which are my delight and my mental aliment."

The duties of his new office were very onerous; but as he had great aptitude in learning business, and could seize the details of a subject almost at a glance, he worked at once with great ease and great certainty. Thus he still found leisure for scholastic pursuits. The following passage occurs in a letter written in 1803: "I have had as much to do before at particular times, but never for a constancy. And I must look forward to its being the same for some years to come. If I can but keep my health, there will still be time left for those occupations which most deserve our preference, though we may learn to like any that tax our powers enough. There is a reward for a man engaged in active public life, which I am now reaping, viz., a fair fame, and a position that commands the confidence even of the unlearned among my fellow-citizens. Hence my employments become a positive pleasure to me. The most intricate grow easy, and I can get through them in a very short time. . . . I am at work on a treatise, as I wrote you before in few words. Its subject is the nature of the Roman public domains, their distribution, colonization, agrarian laws, &c. It is an interesting question, and I think I have taken a more accurate view of it, than has been reached before. I used to busy myself with such questions when I was still at Kiel. I wish I were as free from worldly care, and as open to new impressions now as I was then; but how much that has happened since that time has turned out better than I ventured to hope."

Niebuhr's colleague, Obelay, died in January, 1804; he was the First Director of the Bank, and practically the only acting member of the Directory. His office was immediately transferred to Niebuhr, who, at the same time, by the express desire of the Crown Prince, undertook the direction of the East India department of the Board of Trade, the affairs of which had fallen into confusion; and he also became a member of the Standing Commission for the Affairs of Barbary, of which he had hitherto acted as secretary. His official standing and his income were considerably raised by these changes. The amount of his labour was now much increased, particularly by business connected with the commercial world, and the credit and circulation of the paper currency. The soundness of his views and the judiciousness of his measures were generally recognised, and his management of the affairs of the bank was so universally approved, that his subsequent departure from his native country was the subject of general and lasting regret. He was not merely respected by his subordinates in office, on account of his sagacity, industry, and rigid integrity, but really loved by them for the kindness with which he treated them, and the interest which he took in their welfare. Many of them shed tears when he took his leave of them.

Even at this busy period, he never quite lost sight of his favourite studies, or forsook them entirely for more than a short time together. The mornings, from ten to three, or four, were usually spent at his various offices, or, on foreign post days, on the exchange. Then came the drawing up of reports, the large business

correspondence and the necessary verbal communications with other officials. When he returned home at night after all this he was often exhausted both in body and mind; but if he got engaged at once in an interesting book or conversation, he was soon refreshed, and would then study till late at night. Ancient history formed the principal part of his reading at this time, but he did not overlook the productions of modern literature. He hailed with joy every new work of importance, and put it into the hands of his wife. When they were first married, he used to read Greek with her, but afterwards the weakness of her eyes forbade the necessary effort on her part, and she also found the acquisition of the grammar tedious, and therefore gave up the further study of this language; but in every other respect he always found in her the fullest participation in all that interested him. Niebuhr had little intercourse at this time with men of letters, as his engagements led him into a widely different sphere of society. He, however, kept up his acquaintance with two of his earliest friends, Münter, the celebrated orientalist and archæologist, who was at that time Professor of Theology in Copenhagen, and Moldenhawer, the head librarian at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, and a distinguished exegetical theologian.

The summer of 1804 was a particularly busy period for Niebuhr. He writes thus to Madame Hensler: "As far as regards business, I confidently hope to be able to do something towards bringing our finances to the height of prosperity, although, perhaps, not immediately or directly. Last winter was by no means a quiet one

for us. Even on Sundays, I could sometimes hardly get time to collect my thoughts a little. The winter before, I used to cheer and invigorate my mind with the study of ancient history. Now, that is out of the question. I am obliged to see and talk with so many people; some of them interest me by their quickness and intelligence, so that I enjoy the time I spend with them to a certain extent; but in the long run, we always find that where there is no bond of affection, intercourse is sure to lose its charm, and often becomes wearisome." On the week days, he had now scarcely ever time for more than a little occasional light reading. The Sundays he devoted as far as possible to his private studies, which made those days real festivals to him. In the autumn he began to get rather more leisure, which he employed in continuing the before-mentioned treatise on the Roman domains.

The intelligence of the Austrian calamities at Ulm and Austerlitz, in the autumn of 1805, which deeply affected him, led him to peruse the Philippics of Demosthenes afresh. The similarity of the position of Greece at that time to the state of Europe, and of Philip's growing power, tyranny, and oppression, to the proceedings of Napoleon, struck him so forcibly, that he translated and printed the first Philippic.

Towards the end of 1805, Niebuhr was asked by a distinguished Prussian statesman, then visiting Copenhagen on a mission from his Government, whether he felt inclined to enter the Prussian service, in the department of finance. Some weeks later he received a direct inquiry on the subject by letter. He had

never before thought of exchanging the Danish service for any other, and even now he would scarcely have replied otherwise than by a direct negative, had he not just at that time felt himself aggrieved by the intended appointment of a young nobleman to a place in the finance department to which he thought that he had a prior claim, both from his official standing and past services, and also because it had been previously promised to him, subject to the approval of the Crown Prince. This incident excited in him for the moment a strong feeling of irritation. He thought that it closed the door to any further advance in his public career; he looked forward to being burdened for ever with an overwhelming mass of details, and, what stung him most deeply, found himself slighted in the very quarter, where he reckoned with the greatest security on an unprejudiced appreciation, and a just approval of his services. When, therefore, these proposals were renewed by Prussia, he felt very keenly the contrast between the estimation in which he was held abroad, and the way in which he was undervalued at home. Yet he underwent a long and severe struggle with his attachment to his native land, ere he could reconcile himself even in thought to the possibility of leaving it. His answer to the proposition at the time was quite indecisive, "that he could not commit himself on the subject, particularly as he did not know what appointment was referred to." The winter of 1805-6 elapsed without his hearing anything more on the subject. It had not occupied his mind much after the first moment; and besides, the

storm of his anger had sunk to rest; his old relationships had been renewed, and nothing more had been done respecting the appointment of the young man referred to. Yet, by frequent repetition, the idea of leaving his native country had grown less strange to him, and a consideration of the satisfaction which he would derive from a wider sphere of action, and a release from all the minor details of business, forced itself upon him at times. Added to this, the condition of the Danish finances, which had been much deteriorated through the immense military establishments necessary in order to maintain a neutral position, often caused him great uneasiness. When therefore, in March, 1806, a new and unexpected proposal reached him, to enter on the joint directorship of the first bank in Berlin, and of the Seehandlung,* with the prospect and promise of further promotion, the struggle in his mind was renewed. He communicated the proposal to Count Schimmelman, who, unwilling as he was to lose him, recognised the advantages it presented, particularly as he could offer him nothing equal to it in Copenhagen. What weighed most with him on the side of acceptance, was the release from matters of detail, which he feared would permanently weaken the powers of

* A privileged commercial company at Berlin, founded in 1772, for the promotion of foreign commerce, then in a very languishing condition. The exclusive possession of the silk trade of Prussia, and of the trade in wax, was secured to it, by charter, for twenty years. The capital was raised by the sale of 2400 shares, of which the King had 2100, and only 300 were offered to the public. In 1793, the number of shares was increased to 3000, and the Seehandlung lost its monopoly of the wax trade, but was allowed to engage in general mercantile and banking operations, and its creditors were guaranteed by the State. It lost immensely by large advances made to the State in 1804, 1805, and 1806, but after 1816 gradually retrieved its affairs.

his mind. In this post, the directorial labours, and the general guidance and control of affairs, were all that would devolve upon him.

While these negotiations were still pending, Count Hardenberg left the Prussian ministry, and was succeeded by Count Haugwitz.* At the same time rumours got afloat, which seemed not improbable, of an alliance between France and Prussia. This deterred Niebuhr from proceeding with the negotiation, both on account of his deep-rooted aversion to any connexion with the then existing French government, and also the probability that such an alliance might lead to a collision between Prussia and the Northern courts, including Denmark. He therefore wrote word to the Prussian minister of finance, Von Stein, that it would be impossible for him to leave his native land at such a critical moment, and while political relations were in such an uncertain condition; but if delay were possible, he would accept the post when peace was restored in Northern Europe. Stein answered him quite satisfactorily as regarded any hostile intentions towards Denmark, and allowed him to delay his acceptance till he could free himself from his present engagements. He now decided to send in his resignation to the Danish government, which, after a fruitless attempt to retain him, was accepted.

Niebuhr took this step with a heavy heart, less on

* Hardenberg always opposed the treaty of Schönbrunn, signed by Haugwitz, December 15th, 1805, by which the Prussians agreed to cede Neufchâtel, Anspach, and Clève, in return for Hanover. After the treaty between Prussia and France, signed at Paris on the 15th February, 1806, by which Prussia entered into close alliance with France, Napoleon forced the King of Prussia to dismiss Hardenberg, whom he knew to be opposed to the French interest.—See Stein's Leben, vol. ii., p. 323.

account of the fearful struggle already then visibly impending over Prussia, than because it severed him for ever from his fatherland. Denmark had been the cradle of his infancy,—Holstein the home of his childhood; here he had passed his youth and received his education, and it contained all who were dearest to him on earth, except his wife. For the future he could no longer share their common interests, but must acquire new ones, which were as yet foreign to him. These considerations often filled him with sadness, and there were perhaps moments in which he would have retraced his steps if he had given way to his feelings. Madame Hensler was at that time in Copenhagen on a visit to him and his wife; they parted with the hope of soon meeting again, but with the prospect of a much bitterer parting beyond.

In September, 1806, he left Copenhagen. His friends, acquaintance, and all with whom he had been officially connected, took leave of him with every token of respect and sincere regret at his departure. He staid but a short time in Holstein. On this occasion he only visited Meldorf, where all his relations came to meet him and his wife, and bid them a sad and anxious farewell. It could not indeed be otherwise than anxious, for every one was looking forward with dread anticipations to the fearful conflict, which was to decide the fate of Europe; and their friends parted from them with the certainty that they went to meet this conflict, and were about to be involved in the thickest of the strife.

Niebuhr and his wife were not less deeply moved; they saw the whole peril towards which their path was

leading them, but they went forward with the courage of resignation that was prepared to sacrifice all, where all was at stake.

Extracts from Niebuhr's Letters during his residence in Copenhagen in the Danish Civil Service. 1800—1806.

LXXI.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

COPENHAGEN, *23rd September*, 1800.

Although, in your first letter, you requested us not to speak of Stolberg's change of religion, as it was not yet made public, it would have been unbecoming to keep it a secret from Schimmelman, Stolberg's old and unalterable friend. If he had known it first, he would have spoken of it to us. We happened to be at Seelust* on the very day your letter reached us. Schimmelman was unwell, and we had a long conversation alone. Amelia has already told you what he thinks about it. Schimmelman will never become a Catholic himself; but he, too, finds the present state of Protestantism and the Protestant clergy in general, most unsatisfactory. Even if some among them really believe what they deliver from the pulpit—and if these think about it; what sort of a faith is it they preach? Can it satisfy those who long for a loving dependence on supernatural objects? I am not so much alarmed either about the intolerance of the true mystics; they never were intolerant in practice, except when they were irritated by contempt and ill treatment, and that should hardly be reckoned as intolerance. The unenlightened bigots are those whom I fear, and they will always remain true to their nature.

LXXII.

COPENHAGEN, *24th March*, 1801.

As Milly's pain in her eye has been worse again, and is only beginning to show signs of improvement this morning, you must not be angry at my exercising a husband's authority

* Count Schimmelman's country-seat.

in forbidding her to write, but be contented with a letter from me. Send this letter on to our friends, that they may know the position of our State.

You have perhaps heard, by the last post, reports of the approach of a hostile English fleet, which were brought by the captain of a merchant vessel just arrived in the Sound, and also from the island of Anholt. We did not like to send you these reports, though they seemed to us likely to be true, and when they rose to certainty it was too late. On Sunday night, however, a despatch came from Elsinore with the intelligence that the fleet had been seen there about three miles to the north-west, off Gillelye: there is a roadstead there, where they lay at anchor the night before; but early that day they had weighed anchor, and were cruising about.

On Saturday evening, Drummond and the other negotiator, Vansittart, left, after a conference in which a very insulting requisition was made by them, and refused on our side, till the embargo should be removed. The evening before, an English frigate had arrived here, under a flag of truce, but left again on the Saturday. This flag shows that they consider themselves in a state of war with us, because they feel that they are treating us as enemies. We have not yet exercised the slightest hostility against them, but probably the moment is very near, when the first shot will be fired, and the gauntlet thrown down beyond recall. I think it more likely that blood will flow to-day or to-morrow, than that a delay will take place, which many expect. As a cannonade at Cronburg would be plainly heard in the city, if the wind is such that the English could attempt the passage (which in that case they would certainly succeed in effecting), we often listen, to try if we can catch any sounds of the kind.

Nelson's presence leads us to think, judging of him by his past conduct, that a furious attack will be made upon our harbour. Others give credence to a report that he tendered his advice against an expedition to the Baltic, and said, that he did "not choose to ensnare himself in that mouse-trap." People here are as inquisitive as they are ready to spread news. The attack upon our defences would be a fearful thing

for the town. But I hope we should be able to sustain it, for then we should reap a harvest of glory, and the nation would be awakened from its long slumber; though at a cost, indeed, that we should all long feel. If the war is once proclaimed, it is not at all likely that the enemy will content himself with blockading us, shutting us up, while we complete our equipments, and therefore, in all probability, the next week or two will decide our fate. I do not give you the details of our defences and preparations, because no one can tell but what the mails may be already in danger. However, everybody is welcome to know, that in the course of yesterday, about a thousand men volunteered to enter the service, whereas the vessels are usually manned by impressment.

It seems strange to me to be writing to you of war and armaments, or indeed of anything beyond our own concerns. The crisis is such that it is difficult to think of anything else, especially if one talks much about it; but it shall not so entirely fill our minds as to prevent us from talking to you, about what it is much better to be occupied with, than with a subject that merely kindles anxiety, indignation, and malignant passions. We keep ourselves composed, and continue our employments as far as we can, as if in time of peace. We are reading the Odyssey in the first translation. Milly had almost entirely forgotten it, since she read it at your father's, when you were both girls together. She thoroughly delights in Homer, and you know how beautiful she looks when she is pleased,—that no expression becomes her better. Hence the reading to her is a great pleasure to me likewise. We read before, La Harpe's "Melanie." It is a fine composition; you, too, would not lay it aside without emotion. It is a rare master-piece of great simplicity.

Milly is perfectly calm; the ladies here in general are in great terror. Schimmelman is firm and full of courage, although not blind to our danger. You, too, must all be of good courage about us, but not in too great security, as if no terrible calamity *could* befall us. How and why this is

possible, the court knows perfectly, and I know it too, but cannot write anything on that subject.

As long as the defences hold good, no balls can reach us in the Wester Street, perhaps not even bombs. This for your consolation.

LXXIII.

COPENHAGEN, 28*th March*, 1801.

We received your letter yesterday, and send an immediate answer, for it demands one with a voice of terror to which no one could be deaf. You shall have tidings from me by each post, of everything that I hear, and can repeat. This time, I have written all that relates to our military position in the enclosed letter to Moltke; read that. I am writing to-day to my father and Behrens; exchange letters with Behrens also; one can speak and write of nothing else, and yet one grows weary of writing always the same thing. It is quite out of the question as yet for Milly to help me in my correspondence.

I wrote to you last time with apprehensions about our defences, which I must now alleviate. . . . . Hence I am really in better spirits—better spirits, that is, as to the result; for spirit for resistance we have, and must have, even though we fall, if we are not to disgrace ourselves. Oh that you in Holstein were but safe! Our individual lives are tolerably secure; and unconcern on that score, which would at other times be stupid insensibility, is absolutely necessary in time of war. If we survive danger, it steels our courage more than anything else.

Your opinion of our allies is on the whole correct. I never expected anything else from them, and hence it does not now cast me down, and I thank Heaven for this pre-vision of the danger in its full magnitude (your defencelessness excepted). The King of Sweden has exhibited himself in a very unfavourable light in his conference with our estimable Crown Prince. Sweden has not promised her ships till the 2nd of April; she knew well enough that this would be too late. The Schonen side of the Sound is not fortified, and therefore it is impossible to close the Straits. We have

been hindered in our preparations by mistakes and accidents. Fearful as is our situation, it is not without its good effects. We have been awakened from our sleep; experience has convinced us of much to which counsel could not draw our attention. No one behaves more nobly than Schimmelman. Resigned to the loss of his large property in the Plantations,* ready and willing to sacrifice the rest of his possessions, resolved not to expose us to a greater peril, in order to avert the impending one, by trusting to the chance of a favourable issue, he gives himself up to the dictates of his heart, and thinks and speaks with a dignity and nobleness, that strengthen the very peace and calmness of mind from which they spring. Only one who sees him alone, in a long conversation, can truly appreciate and honour him.

The English are still at Gillelye, and come peaceably on shore to purchase provisions.

I hear that gun-boats are to be stationed between our block-ships, and people maintain that it is impossible to storm the battery on the island. It is said that the whole of the defences are completed. The wind is westerly.

LXXIV.

COPENHAGEN, 31*st March*, 1801.

I must announce to you,—what you will expect to hear—that the English fleet is now lying as an enemy before our harbour, where it cast anchor yesterday morning, about ten o'clock, having been favoured by a north wind that suddenly sprang up. . . . .

I am too tired, and have no time, to go out and collect further intelligence. Yesterday there was mounting the

* His father had bequeathed estates in the West Indies, which yielded each of his seven children £4,000 to £5,000 per annum. Schimmelman, who at this time was fabulously rich, lost nearly the whole of his property during the convulsions caused by the wars which so long desolated Europe, and sank into comparative poverty in his old age. His extreme disinterestedness was such, that he never sought to shield himself from the ruinous commercial crises which succeeded each other in Denmark, but was rather one of the first to suffer by them. He suffered especially by a contract which he had made with the government, to supply muskets, and which he continued punctually to fulfil, after he had found that it would be at a great loss to himself.

highest house-tops, towers, &c. without end; then, twice I had to traverse the long way to Schimmelman's and back to the office, where we had to relieve guard; I was as tired as a poor soldier. As we expected an attack in the night, I chose to stay up. Milly, unfortunately, could not be prevented from doing the same, and it has done her eyes harm. She begs and coaxes till I give way, and then I repent of it, because the consequences are just what I anticipated.

It was on Sunday morning that the English admiral announced that he would commence hostilities.

LXXV.

COPENHAGEN, *3rd April*, 1801.

The report of our unsuccessful defence will no doubt have reached you before you receive this letter.

On Wednesday afternoon, about five o'clock, the alarm was given on account of the movements of the English fleet.* . . . .

When, yesterday morning, about eleven o'clock, the cannonade suddenly commenced with great violence, which was the only thing that could give us notice of what impended, we were excited, but still in good spirits. We had fancied that it would sound much more terrific when so close, and did not therefore believe the attack to be so furious or so general, as was really the case. I went to my office to see that the archives were all packed up. On the way, and when there, I heard various reports that two, three, or more, English ships had got aground, and that they were firing with such vehemence in order to escape being boarded. Meanwhile, the firing went on with redoubled violence: towards half-past two it quite died away, and only single shots fell from time to time. I went out then to gain intelligence. The streets had become perfectly silent, and only single hollow shots were to be heard. By chance, I overheard an officer telling a citizen of a bomb that had fallen and burst by his side. At the next corner, some people were crowding forward

* Here follows the account of the manner in which the English fleet advanced, which is sufficiently well known from other histories.

to read a placard from the head of the police, containing directions how to act in case of a bombardment. I now return home considerably startled; I hear the single shots which I now know to be throwing bombs. I go out again, go at last to Countess Schimmelman, who had just spoken with some one from the Admiralty, and was full of terror. Soon Count S. comes with the tidings, that our block-ships on the right wing are annihilated. I had never before been so dismayed. I return home and tell Milly only a part of the calamity. I soon went back once more, learnt that the arrival of a cartel-ship from Nelson's fleet, was the cause of the sudden, incomprehensible silence of the enemy's guns; and then heard details of the fight, that were touching to the last degree. The whole city was in consternation, and the streets deserted.

4th.—Since we have not sufficient intelligence to be able to give you a connected narrative of the battle, and, besides, our situation will interest you still more than the events of the never-to-be-forgotten day, I meant to write to you yesterday about the former in the first place, and to get more information about the latter against to-day. The regular history of the action you shall have, as soon as I know enough about it myself; to-day I can only write you some unconnected particulars. We cannot deny it,—we are quite beaten; our line of defence is destroyed, and all is at stake, as far as we can see, without a chance of our winning anything,—without our being able to do much injury to the enemy, as long as he contents himself with bombarding the city, or especially the docks and the fleet; because we have been deceived in the plan of attack.

But while we look with sorrowful anxiety on our peril, with indignation on the authors of our mistakes, our spirit rises at beholding the unexampled heroism of our people, which gives us a melancholy joy full of affection, that does not indeed comfort us about the State, nor suffice to deceive us as to our true position, yet fills and warms our hearts, binds us closely to our nation, and makes us rejoice to suffer with it. Such a resistance was never seen. Nelson

himself has confessed that never, in all the battles in which he has taken part, has he witnessed anything that could be compared to it. His loss is greater than at Aboukir. It is a battle that can only be compared to Thermopylæ; but Thermopylæ too laid Greece open to devastation. . . . .

The appearance of the city [after all was over] was terrible. Every place was desolate; there was nothing to be seen in the streets, but waggons laden with goods to be carried to some place of safety, a silence as of the grave, faces covered with tears, the full expression of the bleeding wound given us by our defeat. The bringing home of the dead and wounded, and the wretched scenes that took place then, I can scarcely allude to. Milly burst into a flood of tears, when she heard of the fate of the crew of the Proevesteen,* which was the first news we received. She was again overpowered by her grief when a false report was spread abroad, that our defences had been deserted: she only feared a too hasty, inglorious truce.

The negotiations have been continued; but I cannot tell you anything about them, except that nothing had been decided yesterday, though Nelson himself was on shore. The truce will last at least till to-morrow morning. We must at all events be prepared for a bombardment. The worst is, the Crown batteries can be held no longer, and the enemy will scarcely expose his ships of the line, while he can bombard our docks, fleet, and city. Do not be alarmed about us in case of a bombardment. Our house is in a distant quarter, and it would be impossible really to take the city. . . . .

LXXVI.

COPENHAGEN, *6th April*, 1801.

. . . . The truce has been prolonged since I wrote till the present time, and may last a few days longer, even though no arrangement should be concluded; which, if it could be brought to pass without exposing us to other dangers, must

* Of which only thirty men came ashore out of a crew of between 300 and 400 men.

be earnestly desired, when we reflect calmly on our position after the battle of the 2nd. You will not ascribe this wish to any motives of personal fear. Milly is indescribably calm; the reverence for our dead heroes is ever present to elevate our thoughts; the whole nation gives us an example of courage, of unmoved self-possession, than which nothing can be nobler. Danger is the best instructress; you must not therefore think of fear. But the risk to which the fleet, docks, marine arsenal, all the most important buildings of the city, that is, of the whole kingdom, would be exposed in case of a bombardment from the side of the scene of combat, is most serious. It is not inevitable I know; we have hitherto found by experience, that the English bombs are very bad, and when preparations have been made for extinguishing them, the devastation caused even by the best, may be confined within certain limits; at least so we hope. But accident may be against us; and where order and dexterity must be our safeguards, I do not expect so much from our people, as when all depends on Spartan courage. We must not shut our eyes to this; nor to the condition of the remaining half of our defences, which, owing to the short-sightedness of their constructor, are useless now that the right wing is broken—a defect over which I have many a time, since last summer, fruitlessly meditated. Providence has now brought us a man whose position is sufficiently high to enable him to carry out his projects; and these few days have certainly been employed in repairing the evil as far as possible. But is this enough? and if not, what slaughter must be caused by a new attack, and without our being able to revenge ourselves!

Tuesday.—The negotiation is still far from settled, and I can tell you nothing further without abusing confidence.

It is still possible that a fresh attack may be averted; if not, it will be much more dreadful for us in the city than the first. You may be certain that Milly strives to retain her self-possession. It is the sorrow for our people, and the wounds with which the state is threatened, that weigh us down: we fear a violent attack upon the remains of our fleet;

not so much a bombardment. O that they would content themselves with that!

I am so depressed that I cannot now give you a full account of the battle. As soon as we are quiet, you shall have it.

Adieu, you best beloved of our friends! Shall we soon be able to correspond in peace again? Will not the time come when these hours will be scarred over, and we shall return to our accustomed sphere of occupation, in which alone we can be happy and of use? This time will indeed leave a deep impression on the whole of our lives.

LXXVII.

COPENHAGEN, 11*th April.*

My last letter was written in a state of depression that I would willingly have concealed from you. But that was impossible, and the circumstances of our position only rendered such feelings too unavoidable. We were expecting (which I did not tell you) a bombardment that evening: we only reckoned on a delay from the wind, which was high, and against the enemy. It appeared as if the negotiations would come to nothing. While this, and the general flight in the city towards our quarter, and the other less exposed parts, depressed us, and filled us with grief at the fate of our country, even the gloomy turbulence of the elements contributed to our dejection.

My heart is heavy with what I have to tell you, or should have, if we could speak to each other.

The English changed their minds quite unexpectedly. The truce was renewed, and Nelson came on shore the next day to see the Crown Prince. A truce of longer extent was agreed to, and finally fixed for fourteen weeks. We shall thereby gain the opportunity of sending succour to Norway, where the people are almost dying of hunger. We shall not disarm. The militia are disbanded to attend to their farming operations.

The loss of the enemy is placed beyond a doubt by this

convention. It is not very favourable to him. The utmost he could do would be to sail away, if he wished it. They will scarcely take all their ships home. Parker's son is said to have fallen. Nelson has lost three captains, two who had been at Aboukir; on the Elephant, his own ship, the captain, two lieutenants, and one hundred and seventeen men. It is said, that in another English ship, two hundred and thirty were killed. Two English ships of the line struck their flag, but could not be taken.

Thus we have, I think, won honour, and consideration throughout Europe; likewise a firmer hold on the reverence and affection of all classes of the realm. . . . .

LXXVIII.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.*

COPENHAGEN, *22nd August*, 1801.

My Milly has forestalled me, and told you both how deeply the death of our friend has affected us, and what we beg of you. I feel, my best-loved friend, that I could only express all that crowds in upon my mind by talking to you, or by writing it all at full length.

The termination was much more speedy than we expected. We had still cherished hope. I could not conceive that fate could really be so cruel to you; as little as one can imagine a life in which everything is the opposite of our present nature, and therefore I so long resisted the impression of all that you and our friends described. But the impossible has come to pass. As it is I can say nothing to you, but that your misfortune has wounded us to the heart. We cannot wish to comfort you, for is comfort possible to any but children, who can forget? But we can, and do entreat you to control your sorrow; we can invite you to come to us; and then, with our best powers, we can live for you and with you. The spring-time and bloom of your life are over; but, torn from the world and all its follies, you may yet enjoy another consolation, and a pure delight in the memory of the past, and in the exercise and cultivation of all the noble

* On the death of his first wife.

sentiments that fill your excellent heart. Perhaps then a prospect beyond the grave may open to your eyes, as it has before disclosed itself to wise and holy men in similar seclusion and tranquillity of mind. Faith is the child of such effort and self-collectedness alone; it has descended to many a one who has sought to attain spiritual light and purity; the fortunate rarely acquire it; they feel not the need of it; and the anguished heart, yet in suspense, cannot give it entrance. I cannot, like Milly, comfort you with expectations; but I believe that faith is not folly, and that we are blind here below. I should give you advice, my dear friend, but I am not able, nor worthy to do it; but, when we are together, we will turn our thoughts in the same direction, and together become good and wise. Let us see each other as soon as you can. We *cannot* come to you this autumn. It would have been a greater happiness than we could have asked for, to have lived with you, when you and yours were assembled in a joyful home; our *wishes* will be fulfilled, if you will now come to our arms. I cannot say more to you at present. My health has not been good for some time, and I have already fatigued myself with writing to-day. God be with you, my dearest friend, and give you strength!

Your old friend, NIEBUHR.

LXXIX.

TO HIS PARENTS.

COPENHAGEN, 20*th September*, 1801.

. . . . I work at Arabic nearly every day now, and am satisfied with my progress. I can read most things in a simple historical account without a lexicon, and with its help, I can understand everything; so I think I shall get on. But I do not know how I shall manage when I come to the poets, for whom I am unable to acquire a genuine taste; they are so designedly obscure, and use words in such new senses. There are some remarkable historical works in this Library, particularly among the books which the Society has contributed; for instance, Elwakidi's "History of the Conquest of

Irak," which Ockley did not possess, but from the "History of the Conquest of Syria," by the same author, which Ockley has incorporated into his excellent work, you can see how important it must be. He had nothing to consult about this conquest but dry chronicles.

The authors of the "Conversations," &c., must, I fancy, have lived in Egypt; for Cairo, and the Nile, and Rif, are frequently mentioned. Though their language deviates very perceptibly from the old Arabic, I still wonder, unless the author intentionally approached it, that the difference is not greater. What a wide difference we find when we come to the language of Morocco! They use, for instance, the Spanish article *de*, to express the genitive, and distort the genuine Arabic words so miserably, that it must often be quite like another language.

I have also read lately, with great interest, a good part of Josephus' "History of the Jews," for this happens to be a time in which I have not much to do. I have often wished, in reading it, to ask you, dear father, many questions relating to Palestine and Jerusalem, and to see your ground-plan, and the map of your route, for D'Anville's plan of Jerusalem must be wrong. There are a number of highly remarkable circumstances in this history, which have never yet attracted sufficient attention. For example, the horribly oppressive taxation of the Jews, under the successors of Alexander, which is also mentioned in the first book of the Maccabees: a third of the produce of grain, the half of that of the fruit-trees (therefore of the olives), a poll-tax, a salt duty, and a so-called gift to the king. Why this seems to me so remarkable is, that I believe these imposts to have been established by the Persians; and because they entirely correspond to the Indian system of taxation, where a fourth of the net produce of the fields, sometimes even the second sheaf—as in Tanjour—is paid to the government. We can also see quite plainly in many places, the monopoly of salt by the government, as in India; and the farming of the imposts to a species of Zemindars, who came to Alexandria at a certain time of year to settle the amount of their rent among them-

selves, as they do in Bengal at the time of the rice-harvest. The same system of taxation was continued under the Maccabees,—became still more oppressive under Herod, and if, as is very probable, though it cannot be proved, it still existed under the Romans, it was no wonder that the nation felt their conquest by the Arabs a relief. With such tributes, what enormous streams of wealth must have flowed to Persia as long as the monarchy existed; and how miserable and impoverished has been, in all ages, the condition of the Oriental nations, to whom Nature seems to have given her richest territories, in order that they might not be exterminated by all these extortions, which they would have been in Europe; as Jupiter, in that old fable, lightened the sorrows of the ass, when unable to soften the harshness of his driver, by giving him stupidity and a thick hide, that he might be able to bear the blows. . . . . .

LXXX.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.

COPENHAGEN, 21*st May*, 1804.

My Milly has kept a letter to your Marie over several post days, that I might be able to write to you, dearest Moltke, at the same time. I have been obliged to wait for the holidays to do this, partly because the regular course of my employments, when I am not well, as happens to be the case now, really takes away my power to do anything I wish; partly because I wanted to be able to dismiss these employments from my mind before I sat down to write to you. I do not know whether you have heard, that is, read, anywhere, how much more numerous and onerous they have become. At the new year I was made administrative director of the Bank, or, in other words, banker to the government; and three months before, the directorship of the East India office had devolved upon me. Unacquainted as you are with our public business, you cannot possibly form an idea of the complicated relations with a host of people in which these employments place me, of the laborious

nature of my work, and of the unintermitting application it requires. This, and the kind of men with whom I have to deal, and of whom I must make friends, render my post an arduous one; the business itself is, to one used to it, not difficult to transact, though trying to the nerves, from the constant strain upon the attention which it requires; and it often has some of the interest of a game of chance, when you can depend upon yourself not to go beyond a moderate sum, and begin with the odds in your favour. Through this extension of my duties, we have now a liberal income, instead of the very narrow one with which we began; and as a complete renunciation of amusement and recreation (along with hard work and weak health), would be very trying, we must bear the increase of my work, which takes up my time and thoughts, and in so far, takes me from my Milly, with gratitude and contentment, as a necessary evil. I wish you would all—you, my friends, between the Elbe and the ocean—look at the matter in this light, and not lay it to my charge, that I have undertaken employment which it was impossible you should approve of. It would give me much pain if any one should judge my conduct in this respect with intolerance, and reproach me in secret for entering on a vocation, which, indeed, seems incompatible with all that used to be the object of our common endeavours. Physical exhaustion alone can make me unfit at times for those things, which used to be equally dear and interesting to us both; every moment of leisure carries me back to them; and if Turgot, under the severest financial labours, kept his tastes and intellect unchanged, you ought to give me credit for doing the same. While you were preparing to tread the classic soil, and when you arrived in Italy, I was living in a work that afforded me hours of the most intense enjoyment. I was straining every power of my mind in investigating the Roman history from its first beginning to the times of the tyranny, in all the remains of ancient authors that I could procure. This work gave me a deep and living insight into Roman antiquity, such as I never had before, and such as made me perceive, at the same time, clearly and vividly, that

the representations of all the moderns, without exception, are but mistaken, imperfect glimpses of the truth. My studies were interrupted by a journey on official affairs to Hamburgh, Leipsic, and Frankfort; a journey which did not on the whole bring me much pleasure, because I felt it my duty to employ my whole mind on the financial matters placed in my hands; and it was necessary to associate exclusively with those who could be useful to me in this respect. On my return home, I resumed my investigations with redoubled energy, and for the first time felt strongly the consciousness, that I could produce something worthy of study, of fame, and of immortality, and the desire to undertake such a work. I began a treatise, of comprehensive scope and courageous freedom of thought, on the Roman laws of property, and the history of the Agrarian laws. An influx of business weighed me down for some time, and made it impossible for me to complete this treatise for our Scandinavian Society to which I had intended to send it; however, it shall be finished, and also a series of papers on isolated topics and periods of ancient history. My first essay will be widely condemned, and no nobleman and landed proprietor will like it, at least if he is consistent. I do not even expect it from you; but I shall write, as I think and speak, in the strength of my unalterable convictions, as the old Romans would approve and praise, were they still among us.

I could envy you the happiness of having lived so long in Rome. You will bring home ineffaceable recollections of those scenes. Shall you not see Samnium and Apuleia? That pleasure I should be absolutely unable to deny myself, if I had those means of assuring my safety which are at your command. If you get so far, think of me. Every field there is classic. I think you will hardly return without having seen the regions which equal in importance the sublimest ruins of Rome. Could you procure me at Rome one of the celebrated Samnian denarii, and an Attic tetradrachma? If you pass through Ravenna, do not overlook the tomb of Theodoric, nor the old mosaics in the churches. All travellers despise Ravenna, and yet it is the link that binds

ancient and modern history together, and much has been preserved within its walls. In Venice, seek out Morelli: he is an accomplished philologist, and I believe an obliging man; and in Switzerland, I entreat you to make Reding's acquaintance, and confirm me in my opinion that he is really a great and noble-minded man, who espoused a righteous cause from pure motives.* If you can obtain there, the various constitutions and projects of constitutions, which have appeared since 1798, and any important printed papers connected with the history of the Swiss revolutions, (if such exist,) you will do me a great service. Alas, how freedom is expiring on every side! I have received American papers, from which it is undeniably evident whither Jefferson's party are tending. The regulations making in Louisiana are such that the president there will be a complete monarch. And in Europe not a man left but Carnot! Was I wrong in regarding him with such deep reverence? I have written a little Danish essay to renew the remembrance of two great men of our nation. When you come back, you shall receive it. One of them could neither read nor write, but Sertorius need not have been ashamed of him. Adieu, my dear Moltke! However we may be separated by distance, or the dissimilarity of our occupations, we shall never change inwardly, nor cease to be in ourselves and to each other, what we were when we were simply observers of the world, contemplators of the past, seers of the possible,—simply men. A senseless sophistry is raging in Germany with inquisitorial fury and monkish pride. Do not suffer yourself to be entangled in it under any shape on your return. Think of me, and give our love to your Marie.

* Aloys Reding invariably upheld the old Swiss Constitutions existing previously to 1798, but was alternately opposed to, and on the side of the French, as they alternately favoured the Unitarian or revolutionary party, or the old conservative party, of which Reding was the head. At this time he was peaceably exercising the functions of Landamman of Schwyz, as the constitution promulgated by Buonaparte, 19th February, 1803, had for the most part restored the old condition of things existing before 1798, and pacified the country.

LXXXI.

From a later letter without date.

I envy you the recollections of your Italian journey. It is a hard thought to me, that I shall never see the land that was the theatre of deeds, with which I may perhaps claim a closer acquaintance than any of my contemporaries. I have studied the Roman history with all the effort of which my mind has been capable in its happiest moments, and believe that I may assume that acquaintance without vanity. This history will, also, if I write, form the subject of most of my works. . . . .

The sight of the works of art, particularly the paintings, would have delighted me as it did you. Statues have little effect upon me; my sight is too weak, and cannot be strengthened by glasses, for a surface of one colour, as it can for pictures. Then, too, a picture, when I have once seen it, becomes my property—I never lose it out of my imagination. Music is, in general, positively disagreeable to me, because I cannot unite it in one point, and everything fragmentary oppresses my mind. Hence, also, I am no mathematician, but an historian; for, from the single features preserved, I can form a complete picture, and know where groups are wanting, and how to supply them. I think this is the case with you also, and I wish you would, like me, apply your reflections on past events, to fix the images on the canvas, and then employ your imagination, working only with the true historical tints, to give them colouring. Take ancient history as your subject: it is an inexhaustible one, and no one would believe how much, that appears to be lost, might be restored with the clearest evidence. Modern history *ne vaut pas le diable.* Above all, read Livy again and again. I prefer him infinitely to Tacitus, and am glad to find that Voss is of the same opinion. There is no other author who exercises such a gentle despotism over the eyes and ears of his readers, as Livy among the Romans and Thucydides among the Greeks. Quinctilian calls Livy's fulness "sweet as milk," and his eloquence "indescribable;"

in my judgment, too, it equals, and often even surpasses, that of Cicero. The latter missed *son genre*—he possessed infinite acuteness, intellect, wit; *il faisait du génie avec de l'esprit*, like Voltaire; but he attempted a richness of style, for which he lacked that heavenly repose of the intellect, which Livy, like Homer, must have possessed, and, among the moderns, Fénélon and Garve* in no common degree. Very different was Demosthenes, who was always concise, like Thucydides. And to rise to conciseness and vigour of style is the highest that we moderns can well attain; for we cannot write from our whole soul: and hence we cannot expect another perfect epic poem. The quicker beats the life-pulse of the world, the more each one is compelled to move in epicycles, the less can calm, mighty repose of the spirit be ours. I am writing to you as if I were actually living in this better world, and nothing is further from the truth. Calculations are my occupation—merchants, Jews, and brokers my society. Alcibiades was not wrong when he said that among Thracians and Persians you must distinguish yourself after their fashion (if you must or will live among them, I add, for truly it is better to remain away); and thus it is my ambition to rival the Jews, and surpass our merchants, in the cunning of trade. You would not believe with what respect the Jews regard me; only they cannot understand my having no private advantage in view. But I am heartily sick of this life. Have you seen the manuscript rolls at Pompeii, and do you know if any of them will be printed before long, and how they are to be obtained? Write me word about this,—and if you are able to inquire of any one, and are a trustworthy agent, ask this: how one can obtain a copy of the Philodemus, printed in 1793? (I can now sometimes afford to buy a book, if it is not extravagantly dear.) I am full of painful anxiety about

* A professor of moral philosophy in the last century, born at Breslau in 1792. He is, perhaps, best known by his translations of Cicero de Officiis, Burke on the Sublime, and Ferguson's Moral Philosophy. His own Philosophical Essays are rather popular than scientific—a philosophy of practical life.

politics: I have gloomy presentiments; slavery is incontestably at hand; and the pestilence spares not the innocent. Adieu, my beloved friend! give my love to your wife and your boy. I would write more were I not at the end of my paper, and the clock striking eleven.

LXXXII.

"COPENHAGEN, *January*, 1806.

. . . . 17th.—I left the last line unfinished because I was interrupted, and now I cannot recollect what I wanted to say. However, it is easy to draw a fresh thread from the same clue. By my desire, Perthes has sent you an anonymous translation of Demosthenes' first Philippic. It is by me, and if you have read it, and reflected on the mottos I have prefixed to it, or will do so, you will know what your friend thought and wished with all the powers of his soul, when you asked, "what are we to think? what are we to wish?" (By the by, you must keep this a *profound secret.*) The publication of the pamphlet was so much delayed, that Zama had already decided the question, before I even got the proof sheets, and so I was like one who receives a letter after its writer is dead. At the beginning of the war, which has terminated so disastrously, it seemed by no means a chimerical hope, that it might be possible to avert the fearfully imminent danger of the universal supremacy of France, and to set limits to this terrible empire. We might have expected that the Austrians would at last have learnt the art of war; it appeared as if the army were to be depended on. Russia gave her assistance with pure generosity; and Alexander seemed to recognise the whole difficulty of his undertaking; and to be ready to exhaust all his resources in the cause; his person was a bond of coalition, such as we had never had before; and, what must not be forgotten, the tyranny and barbarity of the French had kindled in the minds of all a hatred which, we believed, must burst into a universal flame. It was indeed impossible to foresee that we had made a mistake; that superior force, led with the

greatest military skill, would, in the very outset of the campaign, completely dissolve an army, placed as if for destruction, and whose ruin was inevitable, even according to the old tactics, after it had neglected to change its position on the 10th and 11th of October.* It was impossible to foresee the stupidity, cowardice, meanness, venality, and, at last, treachery, that, one after the other, and finally all combined, completed the fatal overthrow; or yet the pusillanimity displayed after the final defeat. So long as the struggle lasted, I longed to be in the camp, and, though all is lost now, at least to have the privilege of knowing with what alacrity, and with what a burning heart, men rush to arms in a national war; what blessedness lies in that immovable resolution, which nothing in the world can bend. The appalling misery is, that fear had paralysed the Germans before they had measured their strength against the French; that they thought of safety beforehand. I have felt with what truth the great Ali says, "Despair is a free-man; Hope is a slave." Those who are still, or for the second time, dazzled by Buonaparte, who exult in the lustre of the modern Romans, as the moth in the brightness of the candle that is about to scorch it up, will ere long discover the monstrosity of their idol, and, with Bojokal, exclaim too late:—

> "Wodan and Mana, and all ye divinities! e'en though a dwelling
> Earth may not yield us, still it shall yield us a grave!"

Woe to those who greeted the victories of the French revolutionary army with acclamations, who extinguished in our unhappy nation the last sparks of national love and national hatred, that the imperious French might scatter abroad the scarce warm embers with their sword! I have ever hated

* He refers to the fact, that when Napoleon had succeeded in interposing his grand army between the Austrian army under Mack, stationed at Ulm, and the Hereditary States, so as to cut off Mack's communications, and make it impossible for him to move towards Austria or Bohemia, in order to rejoin the Russian or Imperial reserves, Mack neglected to take the only road left open to him for a retreat, namely, that towards the Tyrol, which enabled Napoleon to surround him, and compel the shameful capitulation of Ulm.

the French as a State, and regarded the humiliation of Germany with the same feelings that breathe through your odes. It is over, and I shall now inveigh, like the prophet Jeremiah, against those who dream of resistance, unless a case were to arise in which, like the Saguntines and Antigone, we must rather choose death. For is not death, when freely chosen and prepared for, the most solemn and beautiful thing to which life can aspire? Who could hesitate to prefer it to shameful servitude, even if he only regarded his own mental enjoyment? Meanwhile, it has not yet come to this with us in the north. Happy are we who have no children! For perhaps it might be well for whole nations to die out with this generation. With two gifts has England's genius blessed Lord Nelson and rewarded him for his deeds; that he died victorious, and therefore still full of hope, before he could know the defeat of Ulm; and secondly, that he left no children to grovel under the oppression of those whom he had so often made to pass under his yoke. We shall soon see how the French will govern the world. What we shall not see in its consummation, but can already perceive in its commencement, is the degeneration of intellect, the extinction of genius, of all free, all liberal sentiments, the domination of vice, of sensuality, not even disguised by hypocrisy; the decay of taste and literature—in this respect we are already long past the dawn. I have written so much about the general calamity, that I have little space to write of other things. . . . .

LXXXIII.

TO HIS PARENTS.

COPENHAGEN, 26*th August*, 1806.

You have no doubt, my dearest parents, looked forward to our letter with more than ordinary anxiety. Up to this time we have remained in uncertainty as to the decision of our fate;* and this is why we did not write on the last post

* Whether he went to Prussia or not.

day. To-day we have at length been relieved from our suspense by a decisive answer from the Crown Prince.

My request for my dismissal went to the Crown Prince a fortnight ago, accompanied by a letter to Schimmelman that was really written from my heart. The Crown Prince received it very kindly, and returned it begging that nothing more might be said upon the subject; he wished and hoped that I would alter my intention. But what could I do? The patent was long since drawn up. I had taken an irrevocable step, and was forced to repress my struggling feelings. I now wrote direct to the Crown Prince, and upon this, the permission for my leaving has arrived to-day, in consequence of which, the matter may now be considered as settled, and can no longer remain a secret. It will therefore be generally known here in the course of a few days.

I believe that very few officials possess so high a degree of affection and popularity as I enjoy on our Exchange (I may say this without vanity, and do say it with emotion), where I have been connected with the most dissimilar classes of people by daily intercourse, community of interest, and the universal approbation which my administration of the bank affairs has received. Hitherto all who have heard that we were leaving Copenhagen, have expressed their sorrow in a very touching manner, many with tears, and I may confidently hope that my career will be held in remembrance, and my name in respect. The merchants have been some of my most intimate acquaintance, and among them more particularly some Englishmen, who, like many "*gentlemen*" of this nation, have a great liking for me, because we harmonise very much. I am fond of the English language too, and speak it more fluently than any other foreign language, indeed almost as much so as German or Danish.

Nor can I flatter myself that this universal affection and cordiality can and will be replaced at Berlin. But all will be right, if the government display firmness and dignity. God grant that they may not yield to the proposition of alienating the Westphalian provinces! Let the consequences of a spirited resolution be what they may, we are prepared

for them,—prepared to sink into a very narrow sphere, and to be thrown entirely on our own resources.

If possible, we shall leave within three weeks. We are hastening our preparations for departure as much as we can. Almost our only object in Holstein is to see you, dearest parents; we shall make everything else subordinate to that. Indeed we shall only be able to stay a very short time; for it is a deviation from our route, which nothing but our fervent desire to see our parents could justify.

We shall be nearer to you in Berlin than we are here, and the permission to travel will most likely be obtained with less difficulty. But still there will be a new kind of separation between us.

CHAPTER VI.

NIEBUHR IN THE PRUSSIAN CIVIL SERVICE, FROM 1806 TO 1810.

THE Niebuhrs arrived in Berlin on the 5th of October, 1806. On the 14th, came the dreadful defeats of the Prussian army at Jena and Auerstädt, followed by those of Halle, Prentzlau, Anclam, &c., within a few days. The French were advancing on Berlin. In the consternation produced by the rapidity with which defeat succeeded defeat, scarcely any of the Prussian authorities, military or civil, thought of making any resistance, but fortresses and stores of all descriptions fell into the hands of the French, strengthening them at every step. Seven ministers even lowered themselves so far as to take an oath of fidelity to the French commissioner, without writing to the King for permission. Stein formed an exception. He had taken the precaution of packing up beforehand all the money belonging to the various offices under his direction, and now sent it on to Stettin, under Niebuhr's charge. A day later it would have been lost. After staying a week in Stettin, the Niebuhrs continued their journey to Dantzic, where they met with a most friendly reception from Messrs. Solly and Gibson. In a few days the surrender of Dantzic rendered it necessary to retreat to Königsberg.

All organisation of the executive was now nearly at an end. Niebuhr was, however, resolved to abide by his post so long as Stein remained there. The intrigues of opposing factions rendered the condition of affairs, if possible, yet more hopeless. Meanwhile the enemy was approaching Königsberg. The royal family went forward to Memel, followed by the members of the government and the treasury chests. Niebuhr and his wife arrived in Memel early in January, 1807, after a journey across the low grounds on the shores of the Baltic, which, at that season of the year, was not only fatiguing but dangerous.

LXXXIV.

TO HIS PARENTS.

STETTIN, *20th October*, 1806.

I hope, my dear father and mother, that you received the letter safely, in which I announced to you our arrival here on Monday. That will have quite re-assured you as to our personal safety. With respect to our future fate you must not be uneasy. We have no anxiety about it. For this I have, in these serious times, to thank the education which you, dear father, gave me, and the principles to which I have ever remained true in my onward course. I shall always be able to find and to earn the necessaries of life. Should all those brilliant prospects vanish, as now seems likely, which appeared to open before us a short time ago, I can earn a living either as a scholar or a merchant; and if I did not succeed in one country, I should in another. A shelter and daily bread will never be wanting to us, and I entreat you to be convinced, that the thought that this terrible calamity will destroy our worldly prospects, which indeed were most promising, has not for a moment mingled with our bitter grief for the fate of the nation and of Europe. My position as a citizen would in happy times have been

very enviable. I should have been able to suggest and to carry out many ideas under the leadership of a most eminent minister; I should have worked with pleasure and satisfaction, and at the same time have been able to reckon upon all the advantages and honours which render public life agreeable. That is now most likely over for ever, but all this will not grieve me. O that we had no other grief!

We start for Dantzic to-morrow. As the French have entered Berlin, and will probably advance hither before long, we cannot put off our journey any longer. The days are so short now, that we cannot even wait the arrival of the Hamburgh mail, though it will most likely bring a letter from you. Till you hear again, and as long as mails run without interruption, direct to us at Dantzic, under care to Solly, Gibson & Co.

It is a long way to Dantzic, and the season is far advanced. In East Pomerania the accommodations and even the provisions will be wretched. To me that is of no consequence, but it is to my Amelia. God grant only, that her health may hold out, and that we may reach Dantzic without an accident.

Whether we shall reach the end of our flight in Dantzic, or whether we shall still have to pursue it towards the north-east, time will show. I do not want to think about it, but we shall bear all that comes with calmness. Only do not fear that we shall want for necessary ready money; we are well provided with it.

You will, I suppose, have received through the Hamburgh journals, tolerably correct accounts of the dreadful fate of our army. For us, a light now begins to shed its ray over the frightful chaos, and to develope a picture which I must gradually summon courage to contemplate.

We have been received here in a very friendly manner, and may reckon upon a similar reception in Dantzic. We shall meet there with the excellent Colonel Von Schack, of the War Office. We became friends at once during his stay here. Such a time quickly brings right-minded people together.

It will interest you to hear that the aged General Köllarbonner is still living here. I bid you adieu, my dear parents, with a heavy heart. Probably our correspondence will be much interrupted at present, and it were hard to say whether you will look forward to letters from us, or we from you with the greater anxiety. Be easy about us. Fare you well, and spare yourselves to us by avoiding unnecessary apprehensions. May our dear mother be supported under her sufferings.* Farewell, and yet once more farewell, my dearest parents, my darling sister, my kind aunt! Amelia begs you to give the enclosed to her sister Frederike.

LXXXV.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

KÖNIGSBERG, 28*th November*, 1806.

We did not receive your letter of the 13th till yesterday, and it is the only one which has come to hand; all the earlier ones which you mention are to us as yet lost treasures. You have all heard something of us from time to time; and if no unforeseen misfortune has occurred, you must have had a continuous account of our adventures through the letters we have sent by sea, whenever an apparently safe opportunity presented itself. Our fate has been harder in this respect; for five long weeks we had no news of a single one of our friends—and this has rendered our gloomy hours still more dreary.

It is a great comfort to us to find that you are prudently looking forward to the measures which the future may render necessary. If we were still in Copenhagen, we would summon you to us, as a hen calls her chickens under her wings on the approach of a bird of prey,—probably our protection would be just as ineffectual. I am thinking over every subject, considering what I may, and may not say. . . . . Do not be uneasy; we are on the whole in good health; mine is perhaps more constantly good than usual; my Milly is

* Niebuhr's mother had been suffering for some time from dropsy

not quite well to-day. The weather here resembles that of Copenhagen at this season of the year. It is a blessing to us that we are already accustomed to this climate, the rest of our companions, natives of Berlin, suffer much more from it, and are almost all ill.

I work daily with the minister,* who appears to me in all respects worthy of esteem. He is a *man* in the highest sense of the word; and, as a minister, all that I could wish.

Many government officers are now returning to Berlin, some by command, others by their own desire; I have my minister's word that we shall not be separated, that we shall meet every shock of fortune together.

In Stettin and Dantzic, I had but very little to do; here I am pretty fully occupied, and it does me a great deal of good. One is less tormented with sad reflections, and does not feel one's self useless.

Any further journey would certainly be attended with great hardships, but hardships are no longer strange to us, and you must not fear them for us; they form the smallest part of what we have to bear. We have here found very dear friends in Nicolovius and his wife, whom you know. Unfortunately they live at so great a distance from us, that we cannot see them very often. The venerable old Scheffner I have not seen even once. Fichte is here too. At the house of the merchants Hay and Philipps we also find interesting society.

Would it were possible to hear oftener from you! Omit everything in your letters which might hinder their transmission. No misfortune shall plunge me into benumbing inactivity; what we have already undergone strengthens and rouses all our powers. . . . .

If the Countess Werthern [Stein's sister] is in your neighbourhood, let her know that her brother is here with all his family, and is well.

* Stein.

LXXXVI.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

KÖNIGSBERG, *29th December*, 1806.

The French have not advanced; on the contrary, they seem to have somewhat retired. It is inconceivable what uncertainty exists here as to the actual position of things. The delay of the French is ascribed partly to sickness — particularly dysentery—partly to the scarcity of provisions. We shall therefore, in all probability, remain quietly here till after the new year.

You must take it as a great favour that Milly is writing to you, for her eyes have been very bad; she cannot write without great pain and difficulty, and is often obliged to lay down her pen. But how can we help writing to you when there is an opportunity. . . . .

If you imagine that the general misfortunes, and the approaching danger, have produced a grave and solemn tone of thought here, in which we should find entire sympathy, you are deceived. All amusements go on just as usual. People look on the war as a subject of conversation, find fault with the English, and lay the blame of all the misery on them; abuse those who took part in bringing about the declaration of war; abuse the Russians, who, it must be confessed, behave in our country in rather an Asiatic manner; comfort themselves with saying that the French are not so bad, &c., &c.

And not one of us may cool his blood by speaking out his whole mind to them! There is an everlasting talk—mostly without the slightest comprehension of the matter—about abuses, about the aristocracy, the Russians, the misunderstood French, and the great emperor, about ruinous measures, and so forth. Of course there are many, very many, who think otherwise; but indignation makes one's blood boil when one is forced to listen to such things.

Stein was on the point of following the royal family the same night in their flight to Memel, though ill him-

self, and leaving a child dangerously ill with typhus fever, when the machinations of his enemies triumphed, and he received his dismissal in an autograph letter from the King, couched in very ungracious terms. Niebuhr was resolved to send in his resignation also. The following letter to Stein, on receiving the news of his dismissal, shows Niebuhr's views respecting the state of affairs, and is characteristic of both men :—

LXXXVII.

TO BARON VON STEIN.

MEMEL, *7th January, late in the evening.*

Since the arrival of Count von Lindenow, it has been rumoured here that your Excellency has been forced, by the untiring malice and inexhaustible wickedness of the men who have plunged this unhappy country into ruin, to send in your resignation. To no one among the many who have heard these fresh tidings of misfortune with consternation, could the news be a severer blow than to me. The Count's verbal announcement left us, however, some hope that our anxiety might be relieved, and that your Excellency might yet receive the satisfaction due to you. I reckoned on the cowardice and half-measures of those persons, and knew that your Excellency would never be weary of making sacrifices to our unhappy country.

These hopes have now been quite destroyed by your letter, and I find myself, in the midst of this desolation, more forsaken and solitary than words can express. I thank your Excellency from the bottom of my heart, and shall ever thank you for the precious memorial of yourself which you have given me in your letter. Fate may probably never permit me to see your Excellency again, and I may soon find it almost impossible even to write to you. I should, therefore, be the more grieved if you now reproach yourself with having been the guiltless cause of drawing me into the

vortex of destruction. What you aimed at was my good fortune and happiness, and these would have been attained beyond my expectations. Permit me to say, that my most faithful adherence to you resulted not alone from my deep reverence for the minister who completely fulfilled that ideal which had never before been realised for me: it sprang, also, from the consciousness that my connexion with you ennobled and strengthened me; and what better blessing could I have? Even if a kind of existence be restored to this State at some future period, and your Excellency's department fall into the hands of such men as we may anticipate, my position, however bearable in other respects, would always be distasteful, because precisely the opposite would take place. I should be in danger of sinking to the level of those persons instead of rising. If, after the conclusion of a miserable peace, your Excellency had endeavoured to bring the finances into order, I should have remained, however much the official salaries might have been reduced; but now my political life in this country is at an end, and no temptations shall seduce me. A few months longer I must of course endure; but then I shall seek a new destiny, and it will be found. Never, never, shall your Excellency despise me, as a man whose actions give his asseverations the appearance of frivolity or falsehood.

I am very sorry that it was impossible to write out in a clear form, a plan for the government of the banks, with all the necessary details, of which I had finished the first sketch in Königsberg; because I hoped it would have met with your Excellency's approbation, and, in happier times, might have been carried out with great advantage. Not that such times are fled for ever. What grieves me is, that the confidence with which you honoured me has not been justified by any production of mine worth mention. Will your Excellency permit me still to send you this plan, should an opportunity offer? God knows that the thought of you, and the hope that your just and grave judgment might pronounce me worthy, have been my support in the most trying situations; and that the remembrance of your Excellency's kindness

will be an ample compensation for whatever course events may take for me personally, in the present complication of affairs.

May your Excellency forget, under the kindly sky of your beautiful native region, the pain of seeing a country, once so dear to you, led to the verge, nay, plunged into the gulf, of ruin, and the vexation of beholding all true help shamefully cast aside! May your gaze be turned away from the fogs of this degraded age, to the last rays of the departing light of all goodness and greatness; and may you leave an example to all those who find comfort and strength in remembering you!

Permit my wife, though unknown to your Excellency, to join her most sincere wishes with mine, that you and yours may meet with every happiness which is still possible in these days.

Once more, and with deep emotion, I commend myself to your Excellency's remembrance. Yours will never be extinguished in my heart. . . . . With the deepest respect, I am ever

Your Excellency's most obedient,

NIEBUHR.

Niebuhr was now undecided as to his future course. He had received proposals from Denmark immediately after the battle of Auerstedt, and subsequently from England and Russia. His heart inclined him towards Denmark; but on the whole he was disposed to refuse office entirely for the present, and thought of retiring into some obscure place, where, with the assistance of a little money that he had at command, he meant to support himself by writing, till the future should show whether, and where, there should remain a spot in Europe, not subject to the tyranny of Napoleon and the supremacy of France.

During his stay in Memel, however, he was induced by the Prussian government to take a part in the organization of the commissariat. The scarcity in the armies, as well as in the whole hunger-stricken province, which did not even contain corn enough for seed, rendered this a business of great importance, and withheld Niebuhr from pressing for an immediate dismissal. The Provincial Chamber of Königsberg * had requested the minister, Schrötter, that Niebuhr might be consulted on this subject, and he did not like to disappoint the reliance placed on his services in a moment of such extremity. His determination to remain at his post for the present, was strengthened in a short time by the prospect that Count Hardenberg, and perhaps even Baron Von Stein might return to office.

During his stay in Königsberg, Niebuhr formed a warm friendship with Nicolovius, who was now a member of the East Prussian Consistory. Indeed, to this period of calamity he owed many connections that were valuable to him in after years; among these we must mention more particularly his friendships with Von Schoen,—the enlightened and zealous co-adjutor of Stein in his vast plans for the fundamental reform of the Prussian State,—whose integrity and patriotism he esteemed as highly as he respected his intellect and penetration. Sir Hartford Jones, the traveller in Persia, interested him greatly; and for Lord Hutchinson he had personally a great regard, though, in some instances,

* At this period the financial affairs of each province were managed by its own Chamber.

he regretted his conduct as a diplomatist. In the course of this winter, being without the means of prosecuting his other studies, he assiduously employed his leisure moments in acquiring the Russian and other Slavonic languages.

In April 1807, the King again entrusted Count Hardenberg with the portfolio of foreign affairs, and, a few days after, with that of the interior and of finance, (the latter in the place of Schrötter) the direction of the bank and maritime affairs, of the police, the post-office, in short, of everything not exclusively military. The immense extent of the business thus devolving upon Count Hardenberg, rendered it necessary for him to secure the assistance of able men. He, therefore, in May, summoned Altenstein, Schoen, Niebuhr, and Staegeman to the head-quarters at Bartenstein, and transferred to each a portion of the public business, subject to his supervision. The financial department of the commissariat was entrusted to Niebuhr, and it was therefore necessary for him to repair to head-quarters. He had to leave his wife behind him in Memel, ill of a slow fever, brought on by anxiety and sorrow at the aspect of affairs, as much as by the hardships of their flight in the winter, and the wretched lodgings and food that they were obliged to put up with in the devastated province. She only partially recovered in the course of the summer.

Niebuhr had scarcely arrived at Bartenstein, when his health too sank under the continued pressure. He was attacked with typhus fever, and remained for some time in great danger. His illness was prolonged by the want

of all attention, and the anxiety and depression which, in his utter solitude, he had no means of throwing off. The letters to his wife written at this time, bear the stamp of his mental dejection, and contain many passages in which he expresses his hopelessness with regard to the results of the war and the situation of the country; still his language by no means equals the intensity of his feelings at that time, because he wished to spare her as much as possible in her weak state. After remaining here and in Königsberg for some weeks, the seat of government was transferred to Tilsit.

New calamities soon drove the King and his ministers farther northwards. On the 14th of May, came the battle of Friedland; on the 18th, the Russian army arrived at Tilsit; on the 19th, it crossed the Memel; on the 22nd, an armistice for a month was concluded. On the 17th of June, the news reached Memel, that the French had entered Königsberg, and that the Russian army had taken up its position on the other side of the Memel. Every one now hastened to pack up his effects and papers; the cash belonging to the government was sent to Riga, and the whole machinery of the State was dissolved. The officials were left free to remain or to embark, since the greater number of them could no longer render any service after the frontier was crossed. Many went by sea to Copenhagen.

Under these circumstances, Niebuhr saw no further possibility of usefulness. He therefore decided to go to Copenhagen, and there await the decision of the fate of Prussia before entering the service of any other State. He went to Count Hardenberg to ask for his dismissal,

but the Count besought him so earnestly, even with tears, not to forsake him and the King, but to hold out to the last, that he consented to retain his post. He now left Riga with his wife, accompanied by the rest of the officers connected with the exchequer. They set out on the 10th of June; by the time that they reached Mitau they heard that a further armistice had been concluded, and on their arrival at Riga, that the articles of peace were being drawn up as quickly as possible.

On the 12th of July, the tidings reached Riga that peace was concluded. They were evil tidings, for they displayed, as a recognised fact, what all had hitherto refused to acknowledge to themselves—that for the present a successful resistance was out of the question.

The conditions of the peace, and especially Napoleon's refusal to enter into any negotiations at all till Hardenberg was removed, showed clearly in what a state of dependence he intended to keep Prussia.* To Niebuhr this attitude of subjection to France was so painful, and the state of the country appeared so hopeless, that he again sent a request for his dismissal to one of his colleagues, for him to transmit to the King. He was aware that upon the suggestion of Napoleon, and the recommendation of Hardenberg, the King had written to Stein requesting him to resume office, but he did not anticipate that Stein would consent, in the face of the overwhelming difficulties, which would again beset him from unworthy intrigues, as well as the nearly desperate

* Napoleon declared he would rather carry on the war for forty years than treat with Hardenberg, on which Hardenberg instantly sent in his resignation.

situation of the country. With his friend he would have been willing to work in spite of all difficulties and annoyances.* Meanwhile a Provisional Commission, consisting of Von Altenstein, Von Schoen, Von Klewitz, Stägeman (then Niebuhr's colleague at the bank), and Niebuhr, had been named to discharge Hardenberg's duties, until a regular administration should be formed. On hearing this, Niebuhr's friend† kept his letter back until he should obtain his decision with regard to this fresh appointment. His resolve was not affected by it. It appeared to him impossible that he could do any good in a commission where there was to be no head, but all the members were to have equal power; and that his belonging to it could only result in injury to his health—already much shattered—without answering any useful end. He had a high personal regard for the men who were named as his colleagues, but he knew also that upon many points they differed decidedly in their views of administration, so that their meetings would be liable to degenerate into mere debating clubs. The immediate object of their deliberations was the restoration of the country from the ravages occasioned by the war. For this end projects were to be at once submitted to them, including the abolition of serfdom; advances for the rebuilding of farms destroyed, and for the purchase of live stock; and the removal of restrictions upon trade and the transfer of landed property. Schoen and Schrötter were disciples of Adam Smith, and considered that their problem was the production of the greatest amount of wealth upon a given surface

* See Letter xciii. † Most probably Stägeman.

of land. The hitherto existing rights and privileges of the various classes, appeared to them hindrances to the free development of the resources of the country. They held it indifferent whether the present feebler proprietors remained or not if their place was supplied by wealthier ones, and thus the greatest possible amount of profit secured. Stägeman and Niebuhr saw the dangers of this course, if carried out with a rigid adherence to theory,—the likelihood of obtaining a class of proprietors who would have no moral interest in the welfare of the country, and the importance of a numerous class of small land-holders,—and considered the promotion of the welfare of the actually existing occupants of the soil, as the true problem of the statesman. Conscious of these essential differences in the views of those with whom he was called to act, Niebuhr still begged his colleague to send in his letter of resignation to the King, who was then at Tilsit. He received a very gracious reply, in which the King expressed his regret at the state of his health, but testified his unwillingness to part with the services of a man like Niebuhr at the present crisis, and therefore requested that he would, at least for a time, devote himself to the service of the State, and to that end repair to Memel as soon as possible. It was not in Niebuhr's nature to oppose a second letter of resignation to such an expression of confidence on the part of the King ; he therefore decided on accepting the appointment, and making the attempt, though he foresaw that multiplied annoyances and herculean labours awaited him. He left Riga after a two months' residence, and came with his wife to Memel.

In Riga he had become well acquainted with the eminent mercantile houses of Klein, and Mitchell. M. Klein was so much struck with him personally, and thought so highly of his views of commerce, that he offered Niebuhr an equal share in his business, in return for which Niebuhr was to be simply employed in forming speculations. This highly advantageous offer did not however attract him, though it touched him deeply as a proof of friendship.

About this time he received intelligence of the bombardment of Copenhagen by the English, and the capture of the Danish fleet. He felt the calamities of Denmark most keenly, and much as he was an enemy to France, he could never forgive the English for this proceeding. When Denmark was afterwards induced by it to form an alliance with France, this was always a sore point which he could not bear to touch.

Not long after his arrival in Memel, he received the assurance of Stein's entrance into the ministry, which was only delayed by illness.

LXXXVIII.

TO BARON VON STEIN.

MEMEL, 10*th January*, 1807.

I had the honour of writing to your Excellency three days ago, when I was stunned by the pain of knowing the certainty of your resignation. Allow me to-day to enclose these lines to your Excellency in a letter to a most trustworthy friend; I write for *my own sake* alone, for there is little here worth writing about; the most part of the stories now afloat are too much beneath your attention. M. Von Altenstein has now told me everything, and Baron Von Hardenberg has communicated to me for perusal a copy of the monstrous,

incomprehensible letter which decided your resolution. It belongs to history! Nothing short of such a degree of blindness . . . . renders comprehensible the progress of disunion which has brought this country to ruin.

Lord Hutchinson is deeply grieved by this occurrence. He requests to be most warmly remembered to your Excellency. You alone have inspired him with unbounded confidence; he reveres you, and proclaims it now more loudly than ever. The unpleasant occurrence with regard to young Walpole (who has been arrested at Goldap for travelling without Prussian passports which M. Von Zastrow had declined to give him as superfluous) has increased the unpleasant state of feeling between him and M. Von Zastrow. This does not surprise me, but it grieves me that, even with Baron Von Hardenberg, he does not feel able to speak so openly, so from heart to heart, as with your Excellency. He finds him too mild, too hesitating. Forgive me if it is an indiscretion to repeat such expressions.

The King's speech to the Parliament promises indefatigable efforts. Lord H. sees no end to the war; it must last for years. He hopes the Russians will improve rapidly under the training of circumstances; his opinion of them is much raised, chiefly, I believe, by the views of Colonel Sontag, who has now returned. But he still fears a general engagement. Your Excellency is probably aware that four English ships of the line are in the Baltic, and that a number of frigates are to come in the spring. . . . .

As soon as the sea becomes less dangerous—two vessels are lying on the strand at this moment, and portions of the wrecks of two others,—I shall request my dismissal, and embark on the first armed English ship, which touches at any point sufficiently near this place, or the place where we may be then. Should the stream of emigration carry us to Russia we may probably remain there. It seems as if that empire would not be so easily overpowered, and in the service of that State one might perchance be placed, not on the frightful ice plains of the Neva, but on classic soil beside the glorious Bosphorus and Hellespont.

It is now, I think, clearly proved that a system of compromise, and a coalition would have led to nothing. For the cunning and intrigues, which would have ensured that such a coalition should be destroyed at last with advantage to one party, were as easy to your enemies as they were beneath your Excellency and your friends. . . . .

With deep and cordial respects, I am ever

Your Excellency's most obedient,

NIEBUHR.

LXXXIX.

MEMEL, 10*th March*, 1807.

Doubt not, your Excellency, that the K. A. [Emperor Alexander] is most desirous to have you near him; that he is worthy to have you in his service you know. Hitherto I have declined all proposals to myself from that quarter. If your Excellency does not go thither, I shudder to think of the future. Here I shall certainly soon draw my head out of the net, and then await the course of events. For the present, I am detained by the pressing wants of the country, in the relief of which I think I am of use, though the mode in which all business is carried on is enough to drive one mad. The probability of some alteration in the ministry changes daily—a sufficient proof that nothing is to be expected! Meanwhile, M. Von Hardenberg will not allow me to leave till all is decided; this, combined, as I have said, with the hope of saving the country ten to twenty per cent. in the purchase of corn, and of thus alleviating the famine, is what keeps me here in spite of my longing to get away.

XC.

TO HIS WIFE.

BARTENSTEIN, 5*th May*, 1807.

A few lines, which our friend Deetz undertook to have safely forwarded, announced to you yesterday our arrival in this little city, formerly a capital. Since your letter of

Monday I have no immediate news of you, though I have heard of you through Oesterreich and Woltersdorf. I find that your fever has not yet left you. I hope it may ere long. To me too it would be an inexpressible comfort to be with you again. . . . .

Everything is quiet, and Heaven only knows how matters actually stand, and when action will recommence. You will, however, understand, that I cannot write to you about this. We have no pleasure in our residence here. Our journey from Königsberg was deeply interesting, but the most mournful I ever made in my life.

Even in the neighbourhood of Königsberg we saw single ruined houses; in the villages the majority are uninhabited; no cattle are to be seen in the fields; here and there—but very rarely—you may meet with a small flock of sheep, or a few pigs; in the villages scarcely a creature appears; the few whom you do see look anxious and miserable. At Eylau the devastation has been carried up to the very gates of the town. The principal street does not look so bad as it did.

No one could give us much account of what had happened, and all seemed unwilling to speak of it; we found, however, guides to the field of battle, who explained it to us. I could not bring away any relics for you—we found nothing on the field but rags of uniforms.

You can hardly form any idea of the dearness and distress here. Memel is comparatively a cheap place, in the enjoyment of abundance. At Lord Hutchinson's I have seen Prince Czartorinsky, and at Hardenberg's have made acquaintance with General Pfuel. I did not see Rücheln in Königsberg. I must make haste or I shall lose this courier. Altenstein and I have both caught colds, but are otherwise well.

May God watch over you! I long to hear again from you. My thoughts are often with you notwithstanding my restless life.

XCI.

BARTENSTEIN, 10*th May*, 1807.

As M. Von Schoen is returning to Königsberg for a few days, I have a safe opportunity of sending you a few confidential lines.

All that we see and hear in this place is most depressing. There is discord among the generals, and the Emperor seems to withdraw his protection from Bennigsen. It has become the fashion to depreciate him, and if all treat him so, it would be no wonder if he were to lose confidence in himself. But when he is accused of intentional misconduct, an inward voice in me pronounces him innocent.

It is believed here that Dantzic is lost. God help us if it be so! But little progress is made in our affairs, and I am convinced I could direct them as well elsewhere as here. I think it is possible I may return to Königsberg for a few days on a mission from Russia.

It comforts me to know that you strive to preserve your tranquillity. Your dear letters of the 5th and 7th arrived yesterday. Even if we must renounce all consolatary anticipations of a brighter future for our country, let us not yield to despair—not even if gloomy cares and sorrow must accompany us through life. Forgive me for not writing more to you now. Every precaution has been taken to ensure our safety in case of a defeat. So much for your relief. Farewell.

XCII.

BARTENSTEIN, 11*th May*, 1807.

. . . . Schoen took with him yesterday a letter to you, which will have a bad effect on you, from the gloomy prospects it contains. Others had already told me that they felt less courage when at head quarters than anywhere else. I thought it was their own fault. But hardly had we arrived here when we were overwhelmed by a flood of depressing inuendoes and diatribes—most depressing because it is

clear that a system of minute attention to details in strategy has gained the upper hand, and the old Russian method of war, whose object is to bend or break, is cramped, and not allowed fair play.

I still cannot be made to believe myself mistaken in regard to General Bennigsen. I know too well, from former experience, how often really clever people are misled by theories to bestow undeserved blame, and maintain unwarranted assertions, because they overlook the peculiarities of the individual case, and, instead of actual experience, which gives courage and consolation to the man whom they blame, have no recollection of the case resembling reality. But I can far less understand how it is that, a short time ago, thanks and tokens of confidence were heaped upon him, and yet he is now spoken of as a man of mediocre talents. It is said that the Emperor and King are going to-morrow to Heilsberg; probably it is a reconnoitering expedition. . . . . I feel myself excessively fettered in writing to you; from Königsberg I shall be able to write more openly. . . . .

XCIII.

KÖNIGSBERG, *20th May*, 1807.

Notwithstanding the distance which still separates us, and although I cannot by any means consider myself as on my way back to you, yet the knowledge that I am writing to you from no greater a distance than thirty-eight miles, and that my further movements can only bring me nearer to you, make my heart much lighter than it was in Bartenstein. I arrived here this morning, and am staying with Philipps. I have come here alone, charged with a mission; if possible to arrange an affair of great importance with Hutchinson, who will probably start to-morrow by way of Pillau for Stralsund. I have, however, little hope of success, for he has not acted in this matter as we had a right to expect from him.

I was called away here to go to him, and now I can have the delight of telling you, that I have completely succeeded

in my object, and have overcome all his difficulties and objections, by clearness and decision, so that now my journey, our separation, my illness will not have been altogether in vain, for he has distinctly assured me that he would not have placed the same confidence in any other member of the Prussian government—not that any great confidence was required in this case, but his views are very singular. I have had a very disagreeable journey from Bartenstein here. I was obliged to travel all night; it has not, however, done me any harm, and a good meal has done me a great deal of good, which deserves mention after the bad food we had for so long in Bartenstein. This bad food, and the other depressing circumstances which surrounded me then, have had an injurious effect on my health. I was obliged, by Hardenberg's desire, to bring with me a major in the army, Count Chasot, who is going to Stralsund, and who was not at all an unpleasant companion. Nicolovius has given me a letter from Lene to you, which has been five months on the road; it will give you great pleasure, particularly the lines from our little Tiny. I have received your letters of the 17th and 18th. To-morrow Hardenberg is expected here, and as the King intends going to Memel in a few days, and Hardenberg certainly will not allow him to go alone, it may be considered as decided that we shall soon return. Greet the Krüdeners warmly from me. I have but too much to say to him.

XCIV.

KÖNIGSBERG, *25th May*, 1807.

A bad swelled face detains me from the Council, and affords me a quiet evening alone in my own room, the first I have had for a long time; and I mean to spend it partly in writing to you, partly in getting rid of some of my work. I am engaged in correspondence both with General Bennigsen and Geheimrath von Popoff, which under other circumstances would be agreeable, but as things now stand is simply laborious. Then I have also to make out a plan of

finance for General Budberg.* How easy, how interesting under other circumstances—how fruitless, how discouraging in times like the present!

Here I am in much better health. In Bartenstein I was really extremely unwell, and the scarcity of necessaries was so great, that at last I could not even obtain oatmeal porridge. With the best wishes, Altenstein could do very little for me. He was constantly interrupted during the day, and had to sit up whole nights, to work. Schoen was quite absorbed in business.

The money matters which I have undertaken for M. von Popoff bring me into connexion with several Russian officers. The Russians appear to have confidence in me, and if I alone had to do with them, I believe that a good deal might be brought to pass. But this cannot be, for on the one hand, it would oblige me to remain at head-quarters, and on the other, I should not be after all in my proper place. For I may freely confess to myself, that to occupy any subordinate position, in which I had not a consciousness of the real superiority of my official head, such as I had towards Stein, would be to leave the only post in which I can labour with success. The various spheres of action resemble the different regions of the atmosphere, which suit differently organised classes of men. Some are most comfortable in low countries; others in the ordinary middle atmosphere; others can only exist in the pure mountain air. I belong to the last class, to those who must have freedom for the soul and intellect, and for this very reason I ought not to have entered into the restraints of official life. I am often seized with regret when I think of my beautiful researches into history—my happy meditations on dark periods—my power of bringing them vividly before my mind's eye—my life in antiquity. Where is all this gone? Shall I ever renew it? Shall I ever be able to restore it to fresh life?

The 26th.—I was interrupted yesterday: I was about to write out for you a passage of Cicero, where he says, "My

* The Russian General.

life fell in the time of a great war, distinguished on one side by enormous crime, on the other by great calamity."

To-day, there is some talk of advancing the troops, in order, at least, to save Graudenz, as it is impossible to deceive oneself any longer about Dantzic. The English ships are returning to the roads, and Kamenskoy's artillery is embarked. If the fortress had been well provided with ammunition, it might long have held out against a siege conducted in so irregular a manner. Much remains incomprehensible to me. Even if our reinforcements arrive, disease will carry many off: want and bad food exhaust the strength both of the men and horses. Our calculations as to the strength of the Russian army are quite delusive; of this I am unanswerably convinced. Bennigsen has completely lost the confidence of the Emperor, yet the latter does not interfere with him. If Bennigsen is what the Emperor and his confidential servants hold him to be, he could not be too quickly removed. In the whole chaos of opinions concerning him, this much seems to me to be clear, that he is unwilling to expose his laurels to any new risk. Whether he deserves these laurels, or owes them,—after the lion courage of his soldiers,—to accident and good fortune, is a question on which no light can be thrown, and shows only too clearly, by the uncertainty in which eye-witnesses are left, how little history is able to represent with strict accuracy.

You may reckon with undiminished confidence on the *courage* of the Russians, but I cannot be blind to other things. However I must not speak of this in letters. The departure for Tilsit, it is now said, will not take place before the end of the week.

Since beginning this, a considerable amount of provisions has arrived, of which I may take the chief merit to myself.

XCV.

TO STEIN.

RIGA, $\frac{16th}{28th}$ *July*, 1807.

. . . . At Bartenstein I was so ill with the fever which I have mentioned, (which want and distress, combined with the unhealthy weather, had rendered epidemic, so that the soldiers and inhabitants were attacked by it in great numbers) that I was obliged to let all the frequently occurring opportunities of forming interesting acquaintances pass unused; and in Königsberg we were alone, otherwise I should have taken some preparatory steps even before the arrival of your Excellency's answer, though it would have been indiscreet and presumptuous to have treated of that in your name. And thus I hope to be justified before your severe judgment. M. Von Hardenberg sent me word, and confirmed the announcement himself when we met, that he had undertaken the premiership, as far as internal affairs are concerned, only until the King should send your Excellency such an invitation to resume the ministry of the interior as would give you full satisfaction, and you should make the sacrifice to the country of returning in spite of all that has occurred. I believe that he said the same thing to the Emperor, and that the latter then firmly hoped for your speedy return as a benefit to Prussia, in which country he then took so much interest, and would have considered it his duty to do all in his power to bring it to pass. At that period, however, M. Von H., who I think wished to excite a desire in the King's mind to have your Excellency once more in his service before making any proposition to him, seems not to have made sufficient progress in this design. To me this prospect was my only consolation, but on this point I could speak better than write.

The King has now transmitted a request, and, without doubt, a very sincere one, to your Excellency, to return to him and to the country in this pressing emergency, in which none but an extraordinary man can bring help, and M. Von

Hardenberg has united his earnest entreaties to those of our sovereign. We await with eager anxiety the announcement of your decision; to yourself, to the country, a most momentous one. Some believe and hope that your Excellency will accept office, and appeal to your conscience as being the only man to whom we can look. Others doubt; and I, for my own part, can fully enter into the doubts which will hold you back. You will not shrink from the task of rescuing from annihilation a country so utterly ruined, and restoring its internal energies, mournful as is the aspect it presents, gigantic the enterprise, and dark as is the future and our outward fortune. But you will shrink from it, when you think of the lasting hindrance to all comprehensive undertakings arising from the mediocrity and baseness, that can scarcely even now be dislodged from their present possession of power,—and the vanity of the idea that a better day *must* follow the night of incapacity and little-mindedness, which will fill you with a sentiment of disgust beforehand. The Titans piled mountains upon mountains and rejoiced in their might, but the stone of Sisyphus was a hellish torment. Having a presentiment that your Excellency would believe your efforts unavailing, and hence refuse to take office, I yielded to my desire to retire from public life altogether, intending to return in the first instance to my native country, collect my property together, though that is as yet but very small, and live somewhere quietly as a private man; unless your Excellency should one day summon me to engage in public business, or, contrary to my hopes, I should find it necessary as a means of support. I have not yet received an answer to my request. I fear that it will be delayed under the vague idea that I may be made useful in some way. At all events, I hope to receive a furlough, and before long it will be decided whether your Excellency accept office or not. In the latter case, I shall insist on my dismissal, being quite decided neither to take part in an ill-organised, many-headed administration, like the present Provisional Commission, nor yet to act under the worse than mediocre men of the late administration, whom I learnt to know

thoroughly at Memel last winter. I have further declined a seat in the Provisional Commission, because it is impossible to transact business under such a form, and also because it is impossible to remain long a member of it without falling out with friends, when their principles are too monstrous, and the consequences they involve still more dreadful; and without exposing numberless weak points to the enemy; for great innovations are in contemplation, with regard to some of which I do not feel myself sufficiently acquainted with the particular case, while on others I am entirely unable to form a judgment.* Besides, I am a pure Mahometan,—a strict Unitarian in administrative affairs, and abhor all Commissions and the like with my whole heart. Hence your Excellency will not blame me for refusing to connect myself with them, though many single oversights might be prevented by a contrary course; and will also pardon me if I should be absent on your arrival. It will be easy to decide what steps to take in that case. . . . .

I should have liked to have added some facts which would be interesting to your Excellency, respecting the Russian and Slavonic languages; the affinity which I have discovered between them and the Persian, and how they are by no means so difficult as people believe them or make them; also about the Grusinian and Russian literature, which I have become acquainted with through a Russian work,—about the noble Russian people,—about the extremely interesting commerce of Riga; but it would have enlarged my letter to too great an extent. I shall take leave to do so at a future opportunity. . . . .

XCVI.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

RIGA, 16*th August*, 1807.

For many years past (our connexion will soon include the half of my life), my thoughts, as well as those of my Milly, with all our warmest feelings, have been with you on this

* See page 207.

day. . . . . How has everything changed since those former times when I have celebrated this day! Where is now the tranquillity with which we then contemplated the external world ten years ago, as if it could never drag us into its whirlpool? Even a year ago it was only at times that gloomy anticipations for *our own* fate rose before my eyes; my Milly scarcely felt them; and about you we had no anxieties. Now we are resigned to our own future, and I often repeat to myself the golden proverb, "He who cannot what he will, let him will what he can." We shall get on thus, and with the certainty of never wanting bread, nor, wherever I may be placed, the affection and respect of the nobler among my fellow-creatures, I live with less anxiety for myself than you probably imagine. But all our apprehensions are excited for our country and for you. Manifold reports have awakened our fears that that may soon take place, which, according to the present march of events, must take place sooner or later—and what fears? We cannot describe our grief and anxiety, for our expressions might be watched in several quarters; we have often expressed them to you before, and now we have nothing but helpless wishes. Oh that the storm might disperse, that we might meet once more on the undesecrated, uninjured, soil of our fatherland! How it has happened that we have been obliged to give up our fixed intention of going by sea to Copenhagen this month, and revisiting you all before the winter, is a long story, which Milly has written to you in that letter. Had we remained in Memel, everything would have been more quickly arranged, and we should have crossed before the season was too far advanced to permit of our return. For there, too, my dismissal would have been very unwillingly accorded, as there is a general wish to retain me in the service, though probably without any definite idea as to how I can be employed; and this incomprehensible and universal confidence in me goes to my heart. (Do not think it vanity in me to speak of this, and do not take it amiss if I ask you not to look on it as a dream of my own fancy.) . . If I had received a furlough, we might have seen each other

again, and refreshed our wearied spirits; now it would be too late; the matter has been put off so long, that I could not make use of leave of absence if it were granted.

Your letter of the 20th of June, is the last we have received, and this absence of letters is now doubly painful. I have been foolish not to keep a diary from the commencement of our flight, in which you all might have had a living picture of us, in the many changing scenes of our various fortunes and positions. If these pictures had been no more than peeps into the showman's box, yet still they would have had some value. Often I cannot write at all, and now when I wish to do so, and am therefore better able to write than usual, I am disturbed by the doubt whether all this may not be written in vain! And that thought makes my eyes overflow. I have long had it on my mind to enter into an explanation with you on one point; not that your expressions have hurt me, but because we ought to understand each other, and because one wishes one's best friends to judge one correctly in everything. I allude to your disapproval of my undertaking to learn the Russian and Slavonic languages, with the view of extending my studies to the other written branches of this ancient mother-tongue, which is spoken by fifty millions. It would have pleased me better if Milly had not mentioned these studies to you at all, because I foresaw that your one-sided ideas on this point would rather lead you to blame than to praise. I will not exactly say that you are entirely wrong, but I cannot help thinking that you do not look at the matter from the right point of view. If I had employed a period of genial quiet,—of inward life and activity, accompanied by the outward appliances necessary for bringing forth finished productions, in learning a new language, such a use of my time would most certainly have deserved blame. But at Memel, where it was impossible to free myself from the present time, and the present was full of oppressive cares, —where I had absolutely no books, the case was different; and I therefore unhesitatingly include my new philological acquisitions among the things which give me the hope that I have made as good a use of last winter as was in my power.

Or, if Nature had destined me for a poet, the case again would have been different; such toilsome labour is beneath the poet. But to the historian—or if that also is too high a title for me—to the historical inquirer, it is necessary to understand all nations, were it possible, in their own tongues. Languages have *one* inscrutable origin, like all national peculiarities, and he has but an imperfect knowledge of a people, who has not become acquainted with it through its own language. Any one who is conversant with Oriental languages, must feel vexed to read what has been said and dreamed by those who have attacked the Persians and Arabs without understanding their languages. What sort of judgment of the French would be formed by a man who had read, say, nothing but "Telemachus" in a translation? It is a great pity that one cannot learn all languages; however, that is so impossible that you will not suppose I have formed such a mad project. I have now probably reached the limit of my acquirements. I think I have derived this advantage at least from my studies of last winter, that I believe I have formed a far more distinct conception of the ancient and modern Russians than other foreigners, with the exception of Schlözer. My acquaintance with the Slavonic language has led me to a very important discovery in the history of races, and their original derivation, which would not be so new as it is, if more had occupied themselves with these tongues. I also read the Slavonian Bible, and that led me to a new theological hypothesis, so I have not merely added words to words, and piled my memory with dead matter. That to write is better than to learn, is indeed true, for it is better to create than to be learned; but for the former I must wait for a time, when the external world does not hold me fast in its iron clutches, otherwise I should only produce something mediocre, and the literary enterprises which would admit of execution now, would give as little satisfaction to my friends as my studies in philology. Will that time ever come? Till then, love, remember the saying of Nathan, "we must not require that every tree should have one bark,"—nor should we blame a lopped tree, if its branches no longer form

the beautiful crown of its youth. Farewell! This deeply significant word I say to you with great emotion.

Stein had received the letters requesting him to resume office while seriously ill with a tertian fever. He instantly dictated a letter to the King accepting office without making conditions of any kind, recommending, however, Count Reden and Niebuhr;—the latter on account of his "knowledge of finance and the French language,"—as suitable persons to settle the question of the contributions with the French authorities. He arrived in Memel on the 30th of September, and immediately took the supreme direction of civil affairs, with a voice in the deliberation on military affairs.

The Provisional Commission with which Niebuhr was connected, had begun even before Stein's arrival, to sketch the outlines of those great measures of civil reform, the execution of which has rendered his short administration a memorable epoch in the internal history of Prussia, and it continued to work with him in the reorganization of the vital energies of the country. Before the end of October, an edict was issued by the King freeing landed property from various restrictions on possession, sale, &c., and another abolishing serfdom throughout the Prussian dominions; and within the following month, plans were drawn up for the entire remodelling of the administration, and the arrangement of the financial system. The latter appears to have been that in which Niebuhr was principally employed, but he also took a share in the deliberation on the other subjects.

The most urgent problem of the government was to

find the means of paying the contributions to the French, which was the condition of their evacuating the country; for till the incubus of their presence was removed from the unhappy land, it was impossible to resuscitate its exhausted energies. One portion of Stein's plans for raising money was the negotiation of a loan from the Dutch capitalists, then the richest in Europe. This business was entrusted to Niebuhr, and he willingly undertook the commission, though he neither concealed from himself nor from Stein the difficulties attending its execution, in the present position of Prussia.

Accordingly on the 21st of November, 1807, he left Memel for Berlin. The journey, performed in the depth of winter, through a country devastated by war, and with a sick wife, was a toilsome and hazardous enterprise. On arriving at Berlin, in the middle of December, he was met by the intelligence of the death of his mother, who had long been suffering from dropsy. His grief for her loss was heightened by the disappointment of the hopes he had cherished of a speedy meeting after their long separation, since his business rendered it necessary for him to go in the first instance to Hamburgh. He was obliged to leave his wife behind him ill in Berlin, and proceed alone to Hamburgh, where she afterwards joined him. From thence they made excursions to Meldorf and Nütschau, to visit their relations and Moltke. In the middle of February they continued their journey to Amsterdam, where they arrived in the beginning of March, 1808.

At first there seemed some chance of Niebuhr's succeeding in his mission, although it at once appeared

that the Dutch capitalists would have considerable difficulty in raising the money, and the Dutch government, who also wanted to borrow, were naturally opposed to the transaction. But all hopes of the kind were crushed by Napoleon's attack on the Spanish monarchy, for, only a short time before, he had induced the principal Dutch banking house of Hope & Co., to lend a considerable sum of money to Spain, by assuring them that he had no hostile intentions towards that country. They now naturally shrank from making any advances to a State like Prussia, which seemed destined to share the fate of Spain so soon as Napoleon should have time to proceed to its annihilation. It was, however, of such urgent importance that the Prussians should at least convince Napoleon of their honest intention to pay the contributions, that Niebuhr was directed to continue every effort to induce the Dutch bankers to listen to the proposition on any terms whatever. He was therefore ordered to remain in Amsterdam, and in June, 1808, was formally accredited as Prussian minister at the Court of Holland. But as months passed away, and the course of public events seemed to remove the object of his mission continually farther from attainment, Niebuhr requested his recal. He received it in February 1809, and was on the point of setting out on his return, when an unexpected offer to undertake the loan was made by M. Valckenaer. An agreement was drawn up between them in March, corresponding in all essential points to Niebuhr's original proposals. The readiness of Valckenaer to enter into a transaction which all the other bankers had thought too unsafe, was partly the

result of his personal confidence in Niebuhr, and partly, in Niebuhr's opinion, of his own over-sanguine disposition. He was, however, indirectly encouraged to do so by the assurance of the French ambassador, that the securities on which the loan was to be raised "should be respected in any case." After all, the negotiation fell through for a time owing to the refusal of the King of Holland, on the score of his own pressing necessities, to grant his permission, without which no foreign loan could be effected.

Meanwhile, Stein's projects for the ultimate deliverance of Germany had been discovered by Napoleon, and had led to his proscription in the month of January, 1809. He had been succeeded in the ministry by Counts Altenstein and Dohna. Both of these were personal friends of Niebuhr; to the former especially he was warmly attached, but he recognised their incapacity to enter into, and carry out the great projects of reform which Stein had sketched, and as he could, at all events, form no plans for his future life until the general arrangements of the different branches of the administration were completed and the appointments settled, he resolved to travel by way of Hamburgh to Holstein, and wait there till affairs should assume a definite shape. He left Amsterdam with his wife on the 9th of April, transacted some necessary public business at Hamburgh, and from thence went to stay with his relations in Dithmarsh.

During his residence in Holland, he had studied with great attention the condition of the country, its institutions past and present, and especially the nature and

gradual formation of its soil by deposits from the sea and rivers. Few or none of his observations on these subjects will be found in the following letters; they are chiefly contained in a series of a less personal character which used to go the round of his friends in Holstein, and which have been published since his death in his "Kleine Nachgelasse ne Schriften."

M. Von Altenstein made proposals to him from Königsberg, where the Prussian government was still stationed, but the permanence of the cabinet seemed to him so uncertain, that he determined to await in Holstein the further progress of events. In this undecided state of affairs the greater part of the summer passed away. Much as he enjoyed the society of his friends, Niebuhr longed at last to find a settled dwelling-place and fixed employment. At length he was expressly summoned (as the return of the court and government to Berlin was still delayed) to repair to Königsberg and secure his appointment.

Here he found everything, not only as regarded his own position, but likewise all that related to the management of public business, in as much confusion as he had expected. The disastrous war, and the insecure position in which the State was still placed, had thrown affairs into the greatest disorder, and there seemed to be no energetic hand capable of seizing the whole with its powerful grasp, and bringing order out of the chaos.

Altenstein, a learned and philosophical man, but destitute of statesman-like genius or energy, had, from the very commencement of his administration, carried on the government in a spirit totally opposite to that of

Stein. The project of the latter for the reform of the administration, which had already received the royal assent, was laid aside; the promise of representative institutions was recalled; no steps were taken to give an opportunity for the expression of public opinion; and he drew back from co-operation with Schoen, whom Stein had recommended as his own successor, and who was a decided advocate of popular institutions. During the unhappy campaign of Wagram, in which Austria, for the last time, attempted to stem Napoleon's encroachments, he could not resolve to take any decided part for the assistance of Austria, but let the time slip away without forming any definite plans for the future, or adhering to any fixed system of policy.

This state of things filled Niebuhr with deep solicitude. His health gave way, and he fell into a state of dejection such as he had not even experienced during the miserable years of 1806 and 1807, when, even in the depths of calamity, there had been some noble minds at the helm, struggling to save the State from absolute shipwreck. It was some relief to him when his appointment, as head of the department for the management of the national debt and the monetary institutions, obliged him once more to turn all his thoughts to active employment, by which he might hope, at least in a subordinate sphere, to effect some benefit to the State. The appointment was made in November, and in December he returned from Königsberg to Berlin.

The contract which Niebuhr had concluded with Valckenaer, had been ratified by the King of Prussia, with the most express assurances of his complete satis-

faction; and, with great effort, Niebuhr succeeded in keeping the parties concerned steady to their offer till, in the beginning of 1810, the King of Holland yielded the required permission, which was in fact extorted by Napoleon from him, on his visit to Paris in the early part of that year. On the 1st of March, 1810, the loan was opened. The condition of Holland, which was utterly ruined by its annexation to France in July, rendered it of comparatively little assistance as a financial operation, though even its partial success was greater than Niebuhr had anticipated in the then condition of Prussia, and considering that it was the only loan that had been effected on the continent since 1808. It was, however, of incalculable political value to Prussia, for it was the fear of depriving himself of the actual revenue which Napoleon expected from this source, that withheld him from attacking the existence of Prussia, when the prostration of Austria and Spain, combined with the alliance of Russia, left him free to do so; and he thus lost the opportunity, which the subsequent breach with Russia, and the invasion of Spain by Wellington, prevented his ever regaining.

Early in 1810, Napoleon had pressed for the immediate payment of the contributions, now greatly in arrears. There seemed, at that time, to be so little chance of the opening of the Dutch loan, and it was certain, even at the best, to produce such a trifling amount in comparison with what was required, that other means of raising money were imperative. The King interrogated Altenstein as to the means at his disposal for liquidating them, and found that his Minister of

Finance had no plan to propose but the cession of Silesia. He next consulted Prince Wittgenstein on the state of affairs, and the latter drew up a scheme which was submitted to Altenstein, who, perceiving it to be thoroughly impracticable, refused to take it into consideration. Madame Hensler evidently refers to this plan, although she does not state that it was concocted by Wittgenstein, when she says, at this date, that "a financial project was now submitted to the King, by which its promoters fancied that they could annihilate the whole contribution and the national debt. The plan was laid before the members of the government for their consideration. Many of its most important provisions appeared to several, and particularly to Niebuhr, either impracticable or mischievous. Among these were the introduction of paper money, the redemption of the land tax, the abolition of many privileges by which the poorer classes would have been particularly affected, the seizure of all the hand-mills in East Prussia,* the imposition of a tax on consumption extending even to the products consumed in the households of the peasantry, and a tax on the licence to trade." Niebuhr was, at all times, a bitter opponent of Prince Wittgenstein, whom he thoroughly distrusted. When the plan met with opposition, the King, under the advice of Wittgenstein, applied to Hardenberg for his opinion of it. The report which Hardenberg sent in determined

* Each miller had a monopoly within his own district, and corn was not allowed to be carried out of the district to be ground, but many of the peasants had little hand-mills in which they ground what they wanted for their own use. The millers paid an excise tax upon all they ground, consequently the possession of these hand-mills by the peasants injured the revenue.

the King to offer him at once the post of Prime Minister, with the title of Chancellor of State, but the present ministers were to be retained in their several departments subordinate to him. Hardenberg refused the premiership on these terms, but at length effected the dismissal of the Altenstein ministry in June 1810. In the mean time, however, he exercised great influence over the King, who had lost all confidence in the former administration.

Hardenberg's accession to power was hailed with joy by the nation at large, but Niebuhr did not share in the general impression in his favour; indeed, many years after, in Rome, he told a friend that he had indeed come to Berlin prepossessed in favour of Hardenberg, notwithstanding the laxity of his morals in private life, but that he had never found himself "so disappointed in any man, except in the historian, Johannes Müller." It was, therefore, unfortunate that, as the finance question was the great problem to be solved, Niebuhr was the first person to whom the Chancellor applied for his co-operation. When Hardenberg communicated the programme of his financial plans to Niebuhr, the latter expressed his unqualified dissent from them, and was so strongly impressed with a sense of their perilous nature, that he held it his duty to leave the King himself in no doubt as to his views. He sent a memorial to him, in which he openly represented the state of the country, and requested that his Majesty would release him from his post, as he could not concur in the principles of the administration, and that he would grant him instead a professorship in the university which was to be opened

at Berlin in the autumn. The King forwarded the memorial to Hardenberg, who was naturally much annoyed at it, and sent for Schoen. But the latter was also opposed to his plans, and, after some further consultation, all parties transmitted their views to Stein. Hardenberg wrote to Niebuhr, upbraiding him, though in courteous terms, with his dissatisfaction at the administration, and requesting him to withdraw his resignation, as he hoped that all difficulties would soon be surmounted, and he was anxious to have Niebuhr's counsel and assistance.* But while ready to heap personal distinction upon him, he withheld that frank explanation of the line of policy he intended to pursue, which alone could have removed Niebuhr's scruples, and after negotiations, which lasted several days, he at length gave way, and offered to request the King to appoint Niebuhr historiographer in the place of Johannes Von Müller. This post he soon received, but with the condition that he should assist Count Hardenberg and the Minister of Finance with his opinions and advice when required. Stein judged much more favourably of Hardenberg at this time. It was not till after a lengthened intercourse with him, and the events of 1815, 1816, and 1817, that he gradually came to a conviction similar to that expressed by Niebuhr in his letters. He did not approve of Niebuhr's conduct in refusing to act with Hardenberg,†

* According to 'Stein's Leben, II. 508, Hardenberg offered Niebuhr the post of Minister of Finance.

† He writes thus to Wilhelm von Humboldt: "Niebuhr declares his dissentient opinion. M. von Hardenberg invites him to discuss the matter with him, and to send in another plan; to this he vouchsafes no reply, but instead, hands in a lengthy chain of argument against Hardenberg's plan to

but his friendship still remained unchanged towards him; and at a later period, upon a full knowledge of all the circumstances, he expressed his approbation of the course he had taken. Niebuhr would willingly have accepted office, could he have done so and remained true to his principles, but while Hardenberg offered him a high position, he knew that he was rather desired as a skilful tool than as an independent coadjutor. He remained for some time in communication with Hardenberg, who often sent him projects in which he desired his opinion, or sketches of measures, the details of which he required him to work out. Their connexion, however, ceased almost entirely at a later period.

The following letters will illustrate Niebuhr's history from the autumn of 1807 to the summer of 1810.

XCVII.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

LANDSBERG ON THE WARTHA,
13*th December*, 1807.

It will be three weeks to-morrow since we left Memel, and to-day we are still eighteen German miles from Berlin. A more mournful and distressing journey we could not have anticipated, even with the worst apprehensions, which the circumstances and the season of the year excited. From Memel to Berlin it is 108 miles by the nearest route, which is the one we have chosen; the other, by way of Dantzic, is still longer. However it was our intention to have taken this latter road,

the King, without bringing forward any other project—and now he wants to appear as a martyr to the truth.

"All this is nothing but a refined egotism, and an instance of the mania so increasingly in vogue on the other side of the Elbe for pouring a sauce of high-sounding, fine-lady phrases over perfectly common-place actions."—Stein's Leben, II. 507.

because it lies through a pleasanter country, and one which has suffered less from devastation during the war; also because Dantzic is the residence of the family of our deceased friend, Mrs. Solly, and we had intended to make arrangements with them for her husband and children, as his spirits were not yet equal to it. But in Königsberg, the impossibility of crossing the Werder was represented to us in strong, and perhaps exaggerated terms; for certainly the strip of land between Elbing and Dirschau, which is all alluvial deposit from the river, is as bad as a marsh road can be in winter. It was impossible to travel along the Frische Nehrung either, because the few houses on these downs, where travellers have usually been able to find shelter for themselves and their horses, (for there are no post horses to be got on this road,) have been destroyed in the war; we were, therefore, obliged to take the regular route through Braunsberg, of which we have much repented, since experience has taught us, that with post-horses and a moderately heavy carriage, it is possible to get along even on the roads most universally decried. We left Memel on the 23rd of November; our departure had been fixed for the day before, but a storm rendered it impossible to cross the ferry to the Nehrung. This was rather opportune for me, as I had had a return in the night of some of the pains to which my last illness left me liable, which illness had been a sort of continuation of my more serious indisposition at Bartenstein. We had a comfortable journey along the Nehrung, with fine weather. We found everything looking, on the whole, rather better than on my former journeys (this is the third time I have travelled this way) through this frightful desert, the only one of its kind in Europe. We got to Königsberg in three days. The last stage is a heath track through the fertile, and lately very prosperous district of Samland, where now the most mournful tokens of the ravages of war,—ruined and deserted villages,—frequently meet the eye. On Wednesday evening, we arrived at Königsberg, where we stayed with our dear friends, Nicolovius and his wife, who are two of the most pure and noble-minded human beings whom we have ever

known anywhere. We rested there two days, as I had business to transact. Königsberg excited very melancholy feelings in us. Some of our friends have suffered more than one heavy bereavement through the prevailing epidemics; others have been cast down by other misfortunes. I never knew so much happiness destroyed in one place within less than a year, as in the circle of our acquaintance there. On Saturday we began our long journey; Milly was still pretty well—I tolerable, and freer from the disposition to hypochondriasis, from which I had suffered so long. Late at night we reached Braunsberg; we could not proceed till noon the following day for want of post-horses, and because it was necessary to get our passports viséd. We now entered one of the parts that had suffered most from devastation and pestilence. It is a magnificent country, with a very fruitful soil for a distance of ten miles from Braunsberg to the Prussian Marches, where it rises into hills of considerable height. Before this disastrous time, it was inhabited by wealthy peasants,* dwelling in beautiful villages, hardly to be surpassed by those in the best parts of Holstein. The roads, however, are of the most wretched description, and all the worse from having served so long as the high road of the armies, and for the transport of artillery, without its being possible to repair them; for now there are scarcely any inhabitants left, and horses are very rarely indeed to be seen; the land is in the stubble, and, as our hostess sorrowfully said, "bears only flowers." Owing to the badness of the roads we only got as far as Mühlhausen; and on the 30th to Riesenburg; from hence, onwards, the country was flat and sandy. On the 1st Dec., a little behind Marienwerder, we entered upon the deep sea of sand which

* *Bauer* means cultivator of the soil, and to Germans conveys the idea of owner of the soil also, as with them the cultivators are generally the proprietors of the land. Husbandmen, working for wages, are termed *Tagelohner*, hired day-labourers, and not *Bauern*, peasants. Thus an Englishman, speaking of "the peasantry," and a German speaking of "die Bauern," refer to two very different, and in many respects widely-contrasted, classes. This should be borne in mind in reading translations of German works on social or historical subjects.

stretches from Westphalia far into Poland, and extends in Prussia to the chain of hills I have mentioned. We passed the night at Graudenz, a place of sorrowful memory. So far all had gone on well, and though we were now about to enter a Polish district, we had lost the apprehensions which had been raised that those parts were unsafe and hostile. For provisions we had been badly off; milk, eggs, butter, wheaten bread, we were obliged to take with us in the carriage, and to lay in a store of, where they were to be got; meat we could scarcely ever obtain. We were well received at Graudenz. I was glad to find a town which, from its proximity to the fortress, I had supposed to be destroyed, in a flourishing condition. We were shown into an overheated room; Milly, who had already suffered somewhat from the privations of the journey, &c., became very unwell; however, we continued our journey, and on the way she grew better. On the 2nd, we arrived at Culm, which is almost entirely Polish, and could get no horses; we were obliged to remain in a disgusting inn, in the midst of Polish filth. Milly lay down, but unfortunately this famous day was being celebrated at this hotel with a concert and ball. The next day we reached Bromberg. Milly's only wish was for repose, and she felt doubtful if we must not rest on the following day. This was decided by our finding that all the horses had been seized on for General Caulincourt. Milly kept her bed all day with fever and head-ache. We sent for a physician, at the recommendation of a merchant to whom I had a letter of introduction. His appearance, which gave token of extreme old age and stupidity, frightened us. The old man showed so many signs of imbecility that we were afraid to try his remedies. Another was recommended to us; but we got out of the frying-pan into the fire. It pains me to tell you of his proceedings. He would not show the prescriptions; but their effects seem to indicate that he treated the delicate woman as if she had the constitution of a horse. As he would give no counter-remedies, we helped ourselves with old prescriptions which we had preserved. We had another horrible evening and night to endure; for suddenly

we heard firing on all sides. The town was full of Poles celebrating a festival after their barbarous national customs, namely, with drinking, dancing, letting off fireworks and firing muskets. Fancy Milly's sensitiveness increased to the highest point by illness, and shots and squibs and crackers let off under our window every minute! You can imagine my anxiety. She had, in fact, another attack of fever, but she entreated so earnestly that I would take her away the next day, that I yielded. We left, therefore, on the 9th; Milly still extremely weak. We had to wait a long time for post-horses, so that we did not reach Nakel till late in the evening. Here we found a good night's lodging. On the 10th she felt better. We proceeded, intending only to travel two stages. It was a very rough day, and there was some draught in the carriage. Where we wanted to stop there were no rooms to be had, so we were obliged to go further. We were confidently assured that we should find comfortable accommodation at Schneidemühl, a flourishing little town. In consequence of the roads being deep in sand and marsh, we did not arrive there till two in the morning, and here, also, we could get no room on account of the number of troops quartered there on their march. It was a dreadful moment. Milly was exhausted to the last degree. At length the post-master allowed us to go to his wife's residence. She, however, either would not or could not give us a room with a fire, and showed us into one that was cold and wet. We had, therefore, no choice but to go on at all risks. We procured horses and drove three miles further to Schönlanke. Here, likewise, we could at first get no accommodation. Milly was by this time so ill that I sat beside her in terror. At last the post-master took pity on us, and allowed us to pass a few hours in his warm room till another was heated. One is very thankful for kindness of this sort under such circumstances. At last Milly was able to lie down. She remained the greater part of the day in bed. Her former malady showed itself again. We used our remedies and subdued it. There was nothing for it but to push on. The 12th, we got to Driesen, where we happily

found accommodation. But the journey had done my poor Milly no good; she was yesterday, 13th, when I began this letter, miserably weak and ill. I have persuaded her to take a day's rest here. To-morrow we shall resume our journey towards Berlin, which we most ardently desire to reach, in order to get medical advice and rest for her. We shall manage to hold out these eighteen miles, as we have travelled nine-and-twenty from Bromberg. You may fancy what a state of anxiety I am in. It is very inconvenient for us, too, that we have no maid-servant, since we have left ours in Memel; and we shall find it so likewise in Berlin, till we can get one, as I must often be away on business. We keep ourselves up with hope. Among the most consoling images it presents to us is that of seeing your and our friends in Holstein. I shall write to you from Berlin as soon as I can. Perhaps Milly will be able to write a few lines too.

XCVIII.

MELDORF, *February*, 1808.

I cannot leave the place from which I wrote to you for the first time twelve years ago, without transporting myself to your presence with my pen.

Dearest Dora, we feel the separation from you most painfully. The consoling and strengthening influence of our meeting with you will long remain with us; it renewed the spring-tide of our old friendship, and new seed has been sown which will bear fruit. My aged father has become very weak, as you, no doubt, perceived during your stay here in the summer, but did not like to tell us of it. He is no more infirm in mind than he was before my journey to England; but the life and interest which his farming occupations had given him for years is quite gone, and I fear there is no other stimulant that can excite him in the same way again. His strength has failed much since the autumn, when we saw him together, and the weakness of his eyes incapacitates him from any exertion. All this makes me very sad.

I pour out my heart to you about this sorrow: I feel as if we had both for a long time past said too little in our letters about our personal concerns, on which, however, we can scarcely have any reserves with each other. Our conversations at the places where we have seen each other have been seldom so free, that we could form a vivid picture of all your circumstances.

XCIX.

AMSTERDAM, 30*th March*, 1808.

. . . . The golden rule of Leonardo da Vinci must now be our maxim in all things. In this way we can find peace if not personally exposed to the storm, and on this principle I am turning my time to account here, uncertain as our future is, as busily as if I were acquiring various branches of knowledge in accordance with a plan drawn up for my life. Our income has been considerably lessened by the general reduction of salaries; but that is a small matter, about which I leave it to others to complain. For how long is our future secure in any sense! But even this does not disquiet me. Has not a year already passed since the Emperor Alexander was in Memel? Have we not got through this mournful year far more fortunately than many others? Indeed to me it has been instructive and morally improving. It is now a great comfort to have got through a whole year, especially since time advances so slowly. And during this period we have been much favoured by Providence; Milly has completely recovered from an illness amidst the most dangerous circumstances; we have been spared from the immediate perils of war; an accident saved us from participation in the misfortunes of Copenhagen; we have been delivered from pestilence and from our dreary banishment; have seen you once more, and are now in safety in a land full of instruction. From all this I draw consolation for the future, and thankfulness to God for my past life, which has perhaps in many ways been a better discipline for me than I have suspected.

It is on your account that we feel the principal anxiety.

I would give much to know that you were not in Kiel. Of all places Kiel is the most in danger. I cannot rely upon the humanity of the English to spare the defenceless asylum of the noble Queen, and I have no confidence in the fortification of the coast.

C.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.

AMSTERDAM, 18*th May*, 1808.

. . . . Men differ widely from each other in their capacity for friendship—let me say for love. We shall not dispute the assertion of Empedocles that friendship is always a power of attraction. But in many persons it is only a magnetic one, where the square of the distance, and the united power of several weaker magnets may to a great extent neutralize that of the single stronger one; so that such friendships depend too much upon proximity; and when the friends, who have been unavoidably separated for a time, are restored to each other by fate, they find themselves at first much less powerfully attracted to each other than to those with whom they have had constant intercourse during the preceding interval, even though the attachment of the latter may not be such as will stand trial. There is another power, which operates equally through all spaces, like the emanation of light,—a power to which distance and separation are as nothing, because its seat is in that inward world which the mind, through her faculties of conception and imagination, creates out of and independent of the real and historical one. I thank you both that your reception of me, and our whole intercourse during the time we were together, proved that your affection for me is of this latter kind.* . . . .

We will allow ourselves to indulge still brighter hopes from the intimations contained in Dora's last letter, and if my most earnest wishes on your behalf are but cries to an

* Here follow references to the illness of Moltke's son, and the health of his wife, who was already ill of the consumption that terminated her life a few months later.

inexorable destiny, in Milly's more pious mind they are prayers. I cannot express to you, how we love you both and your children, and yet I would fain do so in this time of sorrow, when love and faithfulness are the only consolation. We have made our covenant together; you admitted your disciple to the equality of friendship, at a time when with all my other friends there could only be attachment on my side, without any claims to an equal return of confidence or affection: believing only too firmly, before it had been proved, that although I had as yet no objective power, nothing but warmth, enthusiasm for all that I undertook, there lay within me capabilities for great works, of which I then possessed only an imperfect idea, and had conceived only a vague outline. From this condition of mind, there arose within me a mortal conflict between my belief in my future high vocation, coupled with the sense of my present weakness and imperfection, and my repugnance to take a standing beside or below finished mediocrity;—a conflict from which I have come out like a troop that has been surrounded, of whom a part hew their way through, while the greater number, and perhaps the bravest of them, perish upon the field. You gave me a place in your heart, not merely as believing that I might one day become all for which I had a capacity and a calling, but as if I were that already. And yet I have never been able to realize my aspirations, and have been obliged to replace the brave troops that have fallen, with a sorry rabble; instead of poetry, archæology and ancient history, I have had to cultivate finance, banking, administration—all of which, between ourselves, are (compared to my brave old comrades) a set of beggarly fellows, that sometimes almost drive me mad, especially when anything reminds me strongly of all those whom I have lost. Sismondi's History has done this lately: I wrote forthwith to Stein, and hinted that I should like a mission to Italy, in order to compose a history of Rome (a continuation of Livy's from the year 588 to 625) amidst her ruins. But he wrote a very friendly letter back, to say that it was out of the question; that I must remain under the yoke. God

grant only—how low we are sunk to make such a prayer—that I may long have it to bear! Our prospects are very gloomy; but who cannot say the same? As regards myself, my courage does not fail, though our personal interests also are seriously threatened. Milly has so fallen in love with Sismondi's Italian Republics, that she is making extracts from the book all day long. I admire him much, but all is not what it might be. The drawing is for the most part excellent, but the colouring often false. During my stay here I have busied myself with researches into the ancient races and institutions of northern Germany, and the study of the history of Holland. What a countless host of strong-minded and sound-hearted men, and how much greatness!

This, too, is not yet written. While studying it, I often forget the present; but then comes a story of the carnage at Madrid, an image of the agonies of Prussia, a recollection of my ever-beloved Denmark, and all my dreams vanish; I feel nothing but my misery. You have, I suppose, received a part at least of the journal of my travels, from Dora. It will, however, contain for you large barren steppes, and you must remember, in judging of it, that it was not written for you, nor, in fact, strictly speaking, for Dora, though many of the letters are directed to her, so that much, even in these last, can have no interest to you or her. It is my father chiefly who will enjoy them, and he wanted something to cheer him up. This object has been quite answered by them. Only one whose mind dwells entirely or principally within the limits of his daily life, could take pleasure at all times in such an unbroken description of the every-day world. I should have directed all my letters to him, but that Dora likes also to hear something of our every-day proceedings, and some other things were mixed up with them, and finally because it is a pleasure to me to write to her. You must take all this into account in reading them; we are on a classical soil, but one that is so only in a single respect. You must learn Dutch in order to read the great Vondel, and for the sake of the country, and of freedom. Vondel is a genius of the first magnitude. The

language is *very easy* to learn; it has cost me no trouble at all; the pronunciation is the only difficulty, and in that I want practice, because every one speaks French. One word more. When I talk about the court, I do it for my father's sake. Do not misconstrue me; above all things do not believe that I am indeed at the grindstone where the depth is polished out of hearts, which have long since been worn smooth by the friction of the world. It is nothing of the kind. Do you know what, of all things, I stand most in need of here? A Goethe, were it only his Faust: my catechism, the epitome of my convictions and feelings, for what is not contained in the existing fragment would be found in the complete work, were it written. A hundred times has the desire to complete it risen up within my mind, but my powers are not commensurate with my will. I only wish I had the Old Gentleman up here for a bit above ground! He should have work enough to do, and I would win heaven in spite of him. Farewell, my beloved ones, and give our love to your children, as if we were your brother and sister. Give best remembrances, too, to Philippina and Falk from your

NIEBUHR.

CI.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

UTRECHT, *May*, 1808.

. . . . . I have heard nothing for this week past from Berlin, that is, from Stein. The fate of our poor country, therefore, is still undecided—a state of things which use alone can enable me to bear. O that Denmark's position were but more hopeful! In Memel, Denmark was often a consolation to me, and a bright spot on which my weary eye could rest. But how can I bear to deepen your sadness? You will know what it is to hear of, I believe only too many, things that formerly appeared to you to be exaggerations. What would I not give that you should have remained without this bitter experience! People here have had their troubles; they have lost much that cannot be replaced, and have still

heavy burdens to bear; yet the war has scathed them but little. A citizen of this town complained to me that the soldiers quartered upon him in 1795, had cost him not less than 150 guilders. I laughed in his face. Milly asks me to leave a corner for her. Read for your refreshment Sismondi's History of the Italian Republics. Thanks for your letters of introduction; but what can the natural philosophers have to say to me?

CII.

AMSTERDAM, 17*th June*, 1808.

. . . . Here, also, they talk of changing their King, as a man might talk of changing his bailiff on his estate. This country could only lose by any change, and I should share the sorrow of the most intelligent men in such a case. The government is national and good, and the King only too humane and tender-hearted. A short time since, the signing of some criminal warrants, where he found, after a second examination, that a mitigation of the sentence was impossible, literally made him ill on the day of the execution.

CIII.

1*st July*, 1808.

. . . . . I have not been well for some time, and have suffered much from sleeplessness. Often I lie awake till daylight. Yesterday I felt particularly unwell; to-day I am much better. But will it last? I have found my former experience irresistibly confirmed, that with me the body depends entirely on the mind, and that my indisposition almost always arises from some impediment to the free action of my mind, which seems to introduce disorder into all the functions of the bodily machine. When my mind is exerting itself freely and energetically upon a great subject, and I advance successfully from one point to another, displaying their mutual connexion as I proceed, I either feel no physical inconveniences, or if they show themselves, they

disappear again very quickly. No man can have a more vivid perception, that *creating* is the true essence of life, than I derive from my internal experience. But if I am altogether restricted to a passive state of mind, as is the case at present, the whole machine comes to a stop, and my inward discomfort brings on an unhealthy condition of body, of which I have an unmistakeable outward sign in the contrast between the free and strong circulation of the blood in the former state, and its irregularity in the latter. Now, if it stood in our power, when outward circumstances are unfavourable to our activity in practical life, to choose at once a field of intellectual labour instead, and to transport our whole faculties into its sphere, this evil would be easily overcome; and I have often thought that in this manner one might almost make oneself immortal. But, alas, how many hindrances stand in the way! And how impossible this independence is rendered by the interruptions to our equanimity! Above all is this the case when one is engaged in public business, which has to be carried on according to prescribed forms; where one has only to execute, and cannot work out an idea, but must bring every thing into conformity with established rules. . . . .

*If you consider the charge of the physical well-being of the helpless an undignified employment, I think you are mistaken; and that you attach too much importance altogether to the intellectual part of our nature in the mass of mankind. I believe that on that subject we have a totally false view in these days, and though I do not think it can mislead you, I should prefer seeing you openly espouse a contrary view, as I do myself on the firmest conviction. Do you not agree with me, that the so-called education which we claim as indispensable for the people, whether it be of a high cast, and consisting of numerous branches of knowledge and modes of applying the understanding and talents, or restricted to the first rudiments, is only valuable in so far as it is a true approximation to that free spiritual life, where

* He is here referring to a wish he had expressed to see Madame Hensler at the head of one of the great charitable institutions of Holland.

the soul dwells in a world of ideas and notions, in which the world of sense is transmuted, and on which it becomes dependent? That it is, therefore, absolutely worthless,—indeed, rather injurious,—when it disturbs a man destined to every-day life, in his truthful, instinctive mode of perception and action within his own sphere, and only gives him in return, notions taken at second-hand, and torn out of their natural connexion? And that yet this is unavoidable with all teaching and cultivation which does not go very deep? That, for instance, writing and reading, except for the purposes of business, are to the mass of the people superfluous even as a discipline for the memory, and a dangerous gift when they are used completely at random, as the common people use them, so that they acquire only a multitude of distorted notions; because, by this means, the common man is deprived of the truth his senses teach him, which nature has given for his guidance, and becomes familiarized with another and a distorted truth, which takes no firm hold on his mind, and yet robs him of the power of judging for himself? But if it be a moral rather than an intellectual culture which you ask for, this can scarcely be effected with a multitude of orphan children taken in the mass, except by selecting individuals, and by keeping those who are only fit for the usual avocations of their class as simple as possible. And I need not ask you whether this simplicity, which preserves the outlines of good and evil in human nature clear and distinct, even though it cannot choke the evil, be not better than the confused ideas of morality prevailing among the higher classes, which cannot really elevate and make them free, and over which at last a varnish is spread. But it appears to me that pure, uncultivated nature cannot dispense with the satisfaction of all her simple requirements, and that this satisfaction is the best security for the morals of the many, as its want is usually the main source of their degeneracy, except in those who seem utterly bad by nature. A highly cultivated man may dispense with many things voluntarily, because he lives in another world. Thus the charge of physical well-being appears to me as interesting

in the cause of morality, as it is in that of humanity; while, on the contrary, it is a characteristic of our age, that, amidst the ever-increasing misery of the lower classes, we are so earnestly busied in establishing schools for them; not to speak of the absurdity of the popular works which we put into their hands. . . . .

CIV.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.

AMSTERDAM, *27th August*, 1808.

My beloved Moltke, what shall I say to you now that the blow has fallen on you, to which we all looked forward with trembling, despairing hearts, while we thought it as yet far distant? Can I, in written words, express to you our feelings, our grief on your account? Let me rather appeal to your faith in us, that you may find a vent for your own sorrow in imagining to yourself the feelings of your distant friends.

My poor, poor friend, where now, amid the wild tumults of the world, will you find a tranquil spot, in which your grief, raising you at last above the immediate pain of your loss, may restore to you the peace of mind you need for your own sake—for the sake of your children, of your friends? Not in solitude can you regain tranquillity, for the ever-turning wheel of thought within us, which, in prosperity, we fancy obedient to our will, disturbs more than the outward world; and the eye of a friend has more power than aught else to calm the heart. Come to us, as we cannot yet come to you; unless this climate and place are too unhealthy for you. But we *will* come to you—I hope soon, and I hope not for a short time. And then we will strive together after courage to meet the destruction of all happiness, all hope, all joy.

Milly's tender love for your Marie, which you so well know, will tell you how great was the blow to her, when she read in the newspaper the terrible announcement, which a letter from Dora had scarcely prepared us to expect. You

know that she loved no one more deeply than Marie, and that no parting, among those fate has allotted to us, was bitterer than that from her; to live with her was ever Milly's highest wish.

I understand why you have not written to us—you could not; but now, write. I promise faithfully to answer you; and am I not your nearest and dearest friend in the world, as you are mine? I entreat you to write: we will not keep silence on your grief, either now, in absence, or when we meet again. You used to write once when I did not repay you for it.

We will come to you; we will not seek to comfort you, but to infuse serenity into your mind. Pray for serenity; strive after it. It is no sin, even in the deepest sorrow; it is the necessary support to the soul on which heavy burdens are laid, without which they could not be borne to the journey's end.

Milly embraces you with warmest love. And God strengthen and preserve you! Your NIEBUHR.

CV.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

AMSTERDAM, *September*, 1808.

Your last letter, and indeed the one before it, are still unanswered; they would not be so, but that my zeal in corresponding has sensibly declined; and that the circular letters, which I continue in deference to my father's wishes, hinder me from writing others. No more of that; but I must not conceal from you that we are—not myself alone, but the whole public of this city—living in a state of excitement which destroys all free exercise of thought with me, and keeps me in a positive fever. I know this state of mind from repeated experience, fear it, and yet can no more keep it off, than he can who has once been a desperate gamester, when he stands as a spectator by the green table, even though he may not touch a card himself. And in this game,

other things are at stake beside gold. Were it possible to shut ourselves up without becoming hypochondriacal, it would be better not to go into society oftener than once a fortnight, and then hear the purified residue of all the reports afloat within that time, than to hear them, as we do now, from their very commencement, to doubt them, examine them without data, and never know anything with certainty, but the existence of the abyss into which we may all plunge, and to think with terror of our distant friends.

Milly will tell you how we read in the paper the announcement of Marie's death, and that we had not expected it from your letter. Moltke has not written to me, or else his letter has miscarried. God help him! His youthful vigour had been visibly affected by the vicissitudes of his early life, and by Augusta's death; and the higher rose the flame of mingled feeling and imagination within him, the more it preyed upon that inward strength with which we must bear up against sorrow, if we are not to be overwhelmed by it; and hence we cannot but tremble for the effects of such a blow. O that I were but free, and could go to him! When we meet again let us all speak much of Marie. She had every perfection—brilliancy, purity, intellect, grace—and the fading away of her body had not affected the mind. She did not know what she was. No one could talk more beautifully, and no one was more unpretending. Even during her illness, when she spoke of things with a depth of insight beyond all other spectators of the same scenes, she always spoke in such a manner that the hearer could not help feeling that no one else could have said the same, and fearing to appear common-place beside her, although the exquisite beauty of her conversation raised all around her above their ordinary tone of thought. You, too, will feel much more desolate.

Do not indulge brighter hopes for our future, because the Prussian territory is partially evacuated. For it is not evacuation, though the troops may be drawn off. It is not impossible that the convention might be ratified now; but, as matters stand, we could not fulfil it, and therefore

should only pronounce our own condemnation. The impossibility is so self-evident, that I would rather touch red-hot iron than have anything to do with the business. However, counsel comes with time: I mean for individuals themselves. . . . .

CVI.

AMSTERDAM, 13*th September*, 1808.

We received your welcome letter on Saturday, together with one from Moltke, that was long past its time. What you tell me about his state of mind is a great comfort to me; all and everything. I hope that he will find tears, and then activity. It used to be very difficult to me to speak to him of his departed Augusta: now that his calamity is so great and so irreparable, I desire to talk of nothing else with him but of the dear friend whom we have just lost. Then, too, I was much younger, my attention was more easily diverted, and I shrank from the aspect of sorrow. Now, all private affliction is but a contribution to that which has penetrated into the inmost corners of our land, and, under a thousand shapes, is gnawing at every heart.

Probably at the same time you receive this letter, perhaps still earlier, you will see in the newspapers an article, which is to a certain extent a proscription of my friend Stein.* I have seen it this morning for the first time; you may imagine with what feelings! This is my reason for writing to you to-day, for it will not only grieve you, but also make you anxious on our account. But you may be perfectly easy. My connexion with Stein involves nothing that could be in the slightest degree dangerous to me. But what the con-

* Stein was already revolving plans for the future resurrection and deliverance of Germany. A letter addressed to Prince Wittgenstein on the position of affairs, containing the expression that the spirit of discontent with the French *régime* must be kept up in Westphalia, was intercepted by the French authorities, and published in the journals. Stein instantly sent in his resignation, which was not however accepted by the King. Napoleon did not immediately insist on his removal, because he knew that his presence was necessary to the drawing of the stipulated money from Prussia, but waited his time to ruin him.

sequences may be to himself I tremble to hear. With his cast of mind, where a thousand ideas, often of the most opposite description, follow each other in rapid succession, this expression of his sentiments was anything but a deliberate plan; it was the effect of a fit of bitter feeling, which, if it had not been necessary to write the letter, and send off the despatch just at that moment, would have given place to a completely different view before night. It is, however, very remarkable, that both his sister, the Countess Werther, and I, have entreated him, almost upon our knees, to have no dealings of any kind with certain individuals whom he believed to be honest, but calumniated men. That noble Madame Von Werthern, who reads men's hearts with a glance, told me that when she saw those persons, she often felt as if the devil himself was standing before her. Stein rebuked her for it, and was once quite angry with me, when it happened that each of us, without any concert, warned and conjured him not to have anything to do with these people. I think I remember clearly that Madame Von Werthern once told me in so many words, that she had a presentiment that they would bring misfortune upon her brother. Is not the hand of destiny clearly discernible here? Stein always goes headlong from the fullest confidence of hope to despair, and in his judgments of people he often neglects to confirm his opinion, when once formed, by any observation of particular cases. But since his own integrity renders him much more inclined to judge favourably than to condemn, he often gives to a rogue a place in his esteem, which an honourable man obtains but slowly and with difficulty, if he has no brilliant parts to recommend him. "Have you proofs against him?" he has asked me, when I have told him that so and so would act ill in the case in question: the result furnished the proofs, and too late.

I believe, however, that the crisis is now very near, as to the approach of which we have long since ceased to deceive ourselves. A convention had been negotiated,* but

* In Paris, between Champagny and Prince William of Prussia.

was not as yet concluded. Will the thread break at once? It certainly will break, sooner or later. If so, we shall come to you, and truly we shall not be sadder than we are now, and have long been. People may say what they please of the practical utility of history; an intimate acquaintance with it is a sure preservation from being deluded into hope by many an *ignis fatuus*.

Poor Koppe, who will get into trouble, is a harmless fellow, and has a wife and children.

CVII.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.

AMSTERDAM, *30th September*, 1808.

The news that Perthes found you well, dearest Moltke,—the only news we have received concerning you for a considerable time,—has quieted our fears for your health. Suffer me now to implore you most earnestly to take care of yourself, for God's sake not to lose all interest in this life, which has still such sacred claims upon you. I ask from you no more than that you should seek, rather than avoid, the alleviations nature sends you,—sleep, and the gradual transition of passionate into gentler grief; that you should, if possible, moderate the vehemence of your feelings, and, however much it may cost you, keep that memory which will never leave you, apart from the present reality, which will reward you more than most others, if you turn not from it.

My dearest friend, fate gave you what you in your ardent, stormy youth, sought as your appropriate lot. Fate gave you more than falls to the share of most men—too much—since it would not leave you the possession of blessings, the enjoyment of which had made all others in life distasteful to you. You had everything which your heart in the vague longings of youth could imagine, and you gave yourself up to this fulness of love—to the perfect earthly sphere in which all your thoughts found employment, undisturbed by the manifold perplexities which so often prevent those, whose

lot it is to be driven hither and thither through a changeful and uncongenial life, from ever attaining a satisfactory consciousness of what fate has really done for them. I have seen you happier than I ever beheld any other human being, in the highest energy of your own nature, whose internal vigour had enabled it to withstand all the storms that might have devastated it; your intellect enriched, your heart ennobled and matured through love and happiness; when, as yet, you were untroubled by any fears for the life of your Augusta. I have seen you bent to the earth beneath the stroke that deprived you of your happiness; I have seen you pass from youth to the firmness of matured manhood; and attaining, under the influence of your Marie's extraordinary harmony and completeness of character, an inward strength and peace, which neither you nor your friends could have hoped to see in you in so high a degree. Your youth is over, your joys are gone; nothing is left to you but a serene activity, for yourself, for your children, for and with your friends. But the children alone afford you so many joys, and promise far more for the future; your own efforts and the affection of your friends will bring you so many hours—such as those we spent together in early days, before you had won your Augusta—that, had you not been so surpassingly happy, your life would flow by, without, indeed, satisfying you, yet still full of beauty. Altogether, when we compare the worth of his life, who, robbed of his dearest happiness, lives on to the end with a longing, glowing heart, which when fortune smiled on him, had raised him above this world, with the life of one whose heart has never thus bled, but has also never thus glowed, can we doubt whose lot has been the best, even if we look at it only on the side of enjoyment?

If our future were not so utterly undecided, and if you could leave your estate under present circumstances, (which however you must not do, on account of your children, at a time when land is the only property not in danger of complete annihilation,) we would speak of the future, and make plans for living in the same place. But this is impossible for us at present; we cannot even plan definitely for a single

week. I have given up all hope for Prussia, and we shall not live in Berlin; this negative expectation is the only circumstance we can look forward to as even more probable than another. Some time ago we anticipated a violent end to the long death-struggle of our unhappy State, and we then decided to spend the winter with you; now, the sickness has assumed another form, and it seems probable that I shall be forced to rend asunder the ties that unite me to the State, if I will not turn hangman, and go back to Berlin to take part in the horrible work of raising money by grinding extortions. And so we may very likely not only see each other in the course of the winter, but spend a considerable time together. . . . .

Farewell, my beloved friend, and be strong; be at one with yourself, and think not too lightly of what is still left to you. There is an indescribable strength in resignation; on that foundation you may build up your life securely. Do not waste your energies by striving to penetrate into the eternally hidden regions,—nor by endeavouring to give eternity to this world. Eternity is more real than time; let that suffice us; the earth is too small for man, and what we become conscious of in ourselves, is but the lowest part of our being, and shall we lose ourselves in questionings about this part, which seems to us the whole? Do not you act thus, but rather fix your mind on what yet remains to you, and among the rest on the affection of your friend, who loves you with his whole heart. Our love to the children.

Your faithful N.

CVIII.

AMSTERDAM, *begun 22nd December*, 1808.

. . . . . Since I wrote the previous page, and, incapable of continuing, found myself obliged to lay down my paper, I have been constantly suffering in my health, and yet could not make up my mind to send for a physician. My constitution, and more especially the influence exercised on my body by my state of mind—which is always with me the true

cause of health and sickness—are too unlike any thing to be found among the Dutch, for a physician, whose opinions and mode of treatment have been formed here, to be capable of taking a reasonable view of my case; so rest, and a combination of mental and physical diet, must be my chief reliance. In fact, it seems to me, that the methods of treatment in the medical art (which would so gladly set itself up for a science) must be completely different in different parts of the globe, just as civil institutions do, and must differ in different countries and nations. Thus, for example, the physicians here may be perfectly right in adapting their general treatment to colds, indigestions, and hardy, full-blooded systems, without taking intellect or feeling much into consideration. But woe to the stranger with whom these preconceived anticipations are incorrect, and who falls into their hands! In general, I do not like medical men; they form the most arrogant and unprincipled of all classes, next to the nobles, and rival the priests, (as they used to be, for they are now on quite a different road,) and the political economists. And no wonder, for they, too, must have a consciousness of internal untruthfulness, from the contrast between their pretensions and what they really are, and they try to conceal this from themselves by self-conceit. And just as it is very difficult for a statesman not to be corrupted by degrees, unless he is a thoroughly upright man, because the contemplation of the blunders that he often cannot help making is all too painful, so the same takes place with the physician, who, besides, depends more than the statesman on reputation, and cannot, like him, gloss over his mistakes. That this hatred towards the class does not extend to every individual is, of course, to be understood; why, I even like and esteem individuals among the nobility, (of course, I am not speaking of you and such as you,) among the priests, and the political economists.

Thus I have tried another medicine, in the shape of some most select reading. I wanted a book that would rouse my imagination and my feelings, so I took up Mirabeau's

"Essai sur le Despotisme." Do you still recollect lending it to me thirteen years ago? I remember your copy perfectly, and your pencil marks on the margin, as well as the deep impression it made upon me. It is a sweet dream to call those times into life again! When we are conscious of the difference in our way of reading the same thing at different and distant times, we obtain some help towards the picture of what we then were and now are. Formerly every thing seized hold of me with infinitely greater power; but it remained in my mind too much as an undigested mass, and worked as such; now I can discriminate and test more keenly. This eloquent book, however, stands my tests; the more it is logically investigated, the less will it be accused of declamation. It shows quite convincingly that Mirabeau was perfectly free from the folly which afterwards attacked every head like an epidemic,—namely, the idea of binding freedom for ever to a country by the forms of a constitution. He certainly knew the contrary to be true, and he cannot have lost this conviction. Certainly, too, he is innocent of the horrid idea of universal representation, out of which all the mischief has flowed, and which arose in a spirit of imitation that had taken possession of shallow minds, and so-called metaphysicians. For Necker had a shallow mind, but it was German shallowness, which, if it be adorned with outward showiness wears an appearance of practical solidity to the mass of Frenchmen. That Mirabeau afterwards made use of this power is nothing to the purpose; the great man can make use of every thing by subjecting it to himself. I should like, however, to be absolutely certain that he definitely rejected and contemned this folly. Who, after him, would care to say any thing concerning the degeneration of all branches of the executive power under a despotism? Despotism was the sickness which consumed the energies of Prussia; Denmark has long suffered under it; but it would be a folly to take the trouble to describe the yellow fever after Thucydides, and since ages have not taught mankind to profit by his wisdom, it is at least quite superfluous now to delineate the particular symptoms of the disease.

What inimitable sayings! "L'animal que déchire le féroce léopard, admire-t-il la garrure de sa peau ou la variété de ses ruses?" Set in the place of the first word, the subject, the equivalent term l'Allemand,—and the deep truth of the saying is gone. The animal knows nothing beyond the impulse of natural feeling, and seeks no false consolation; but our countrymen have no *true* feeling left; not even that of pain or enjoyment. And on this account, I cannot conceive what is to become of us. Are we to be apes of apes? I implore the mercy of Heaven to grant us a new revelation; for salvation must come to man from without; our own longings only prepare the way for it.

Mirabeau was indeed a great sinner; he was possessed by a devil, but he had a very great nature, and there is more joy in heaven over one such sinner, than over a hundred just men. He was too high above his nation, like Carnot, the only two great men of the revolution. His eloquence carried away the people, and they fancied that they admired him; just as the loud noise of a full orchestra seizes hold of the common people, who would have remained perfectly indifferent, to the music itself, performed on less noisy instruments. Such sinners excite a peculiar kind of veneration in me, though most truly they do not hold the highest place. There is something yet far higher, and over that we can only weep. Mirabeau says, "Si j'ai dit la vérité, pourquoi ma véhémence, en l'exprimant, diminuerait-elle de son prix?" Vehemence of expression is but brilliancy of colouring, and as this is no defect except when the colours are false, why must I find it so often assumed as a proof that I am wrong? Is it true that he who reaches the goal must necessarily go beyond it, because there is a possibility of his doing so? Is an act of atrocity, of injustice, of folly, annihilated because it excites me to passionate indignation? Or must one even take the poor innocent thing under one's protection against its unjust accusers? Here one learns to speak coldly, that is, in general, to hold one's peace; for amidst the praiseworthy and excellent things to be seen here, the stranger feels at last oppressed by

the care bestowed on mere outward life, and the utter incapacity for all elevating sentiments. Opinions here are but prejudices, and those on religion perfectly insupportable. Yet the people, as might be expected, are not really pious; just as they have not been really republicans for many generations; but the administration was free, and more than that would not have suited the nation. . . .

CIX.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

AMSTERDAM, 12*th December*, 1808.

In the first place, I must thank you for all the affectionate friendly things in your letter, beginning with the advice to bear lightly disagreeables which cannot be avoided. If you have strong shoulders, it is not difficult to bear—but if they have become weak? Besides, you yourself would not bear anything of this kind lightly. You have many a time borne with folly patiently. I can do so too, and do it conscientiously where a few good qualities make amends; what now annoys me is something different.

. . . . It must be a strange sort of fellow, a true Margites, —neither digger nor ploughman, nor acquainted with anything in the world,—from whom I could not gain something in a *tête-à-tête* conversation; on the contrary, I think I surpass most in this art, and hence form so many friendships when in a foreign country, because men of almost every class and calling find that they can exchange something with me. But when such a man turns up, and is fastened upon one, so that it is impossible to get rid of him,—a thoroughly worthless man,—how can one help feeling disgust towards him, however much reflection he may give rise to. And reflection, properly speaking, is not my *forte:* what I perceive, I see with a glance; and it is not till I have reached my aim (where, indeed, I cannot fail to do so) that I am able to connect my new point of view with the old one. But on this very account, I am far less able to choose my own course, than the man whose mental progress is the result of

deliberation; my powers, whatever they are, and whenever they are present, depend on an external talisman like Sampson's strength. On Faith, in the general as well as the special sense, I would gladly write to you, as I cannot talk with you, if a hypochondriac could write a letter equivalent to a book. Your Faculty of Divination I would not concede to you, except as it might be a kind of poetry, which is certainly something very high. But Knowledge and Faith are widely different, and both are founded, as it seems to me, on Perception. A third faculty of a quite peculiar kind (and for which we have no word), is the recognition of the incomprehensible—of the impossibility of what is, according to our ideas, most certain, which we meet with, for example, in all natural circles. What I mean will probably not be made clear to you by this awkward expression; it is something, the admission of which, and the constant reference to it, distinguish the seer in nature from the ordinary learned man,—something, of which Dolomieu, for example, had a strong feeling, and which must some day throw a new light on all our sciences. Imagination—as the word is commonly used—will be our guide least of all here; more may be gained from the steady gaze, by which we may at last even obtain a glimpse into the regions of knowledge. To me, faith without testimony is impossible. But as far as faith in all personal relations of life is concerned, I believe, by all that is holy! in all that I see to be beautiful, noble, glorious,—unalterably and for ever! To these belong sympathy, kindness, and self-sacrifice, when the latter forms an abiding trait of the character. But I believe only in the very rarest instances in an unalterable feeling of interest in a person, or subject; for such interest is in its causes and in itself a variable quantity, and may change its direction without any change taking place in the character. Yet I know that I myself possess this kind of constancy—which is no merit in me.

Stein's evil genius has blinded his eyes, and led him on from one false step to another; whether it be, as some say, that he, the unsuspicious, has been entangled in a net of artifice,

or, that want of deliberation, and a resolve to break through his bonds, careless of consequences, have led him to the very point to which his enemies wished to allure him. In times of good fortune, it is indeed easy to appear great,—nay, even really to act greatly,—but in misfortune, very difficult. The greatest man will commit blunders in misfortune, because the want of proportion between his means and his ends progressively increases, and his inward strength is exhausted in fruitless efforts. . . . .

CX.

AMSTERDAM, 10*th January*, 1809.

Yesterday I saw Stein's proscription in a Dutch newspaper.* I was quite unprepared for it, as you will have been, and you can fancy the grief and consternation that seized me. But it is a time in which one must lock up one's sorrow within one's own breast, especially in my position, and as far as letters are concerned. I am waiting with a beating heart for to-day's papers, which will perhaps already confirm our worst fears. It is so evident that his evil genius has driven him forwards to his fate, that I dare not hope that any effort will be made at Berlin to save him.

. . . . . I repeat for your relief the assurance that Stein has never written me a word by which I could be compromised; and you will the more readily believe that I have never written any thing which could even be construed into an expression of sentiments similar to those which caused his ruin, since we conversed together last winter about the position of Germany, and I told you, as I told every one, how indignant I felt at the senseless prating of those who talked of desperate resolves, as of a tragedy. Ever since the Peace of Tilsit, my maxims have been those which Phocion preached to the Athenians of his age, and nowhere have I seen among the declaimers on the other side, a Demosthenes, or even a Hyperides, but many a Diæus. To bear our fate

* The sentence of outlawry against Stein was signed by Napoleon at Madrid 16th December, 1808, but did not reach Berlin till early in January, 1809.

with dignity and wisdom, that the yoke might be lightened, was my doctrine, and I supported it with the advice of the prophet Jeremiah, who spoke and acted very wisely, living, as he did, under King Zedekiah, in the times of Nebuchadnezzar, though he would have given different counsel had he lived under Judas Maccabæus, in the times of Antiochus Epiphanes: "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." . . . .

CXI.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.

AMSTERDAM, *15th January*, 1809.

. . . You can imagine how the thought of Stein's proscription tortures me, by raising imaginations which I can neither follow out nor banish from my mind. A faint hope that it may not come to the worst comforts me at times, and encourages me to dismiss the most frightful pictures that present themselves; it would not be the first time that the terror of a sentence of condemnation had been deemed a sufficient punishment. I will form no conjectures on a question which events will have decided before you read this. It is as if there had been a demon at work, leading him on from one delusion to another, now blinding him by hope, now by despair, now by over-security, now by misplaced confidence, till he was brought to the edge of the precipice; and his previous course terrifies me above all, by inspiring the fear that he will plunge into the lowest depths of the abyss before him. I shall never deny him, and never forget him, though he has become estranged from me of late, and has often acted under the influence of a spirit that grieved me, and almost drove me to despair. It was his misfortune that I was separated from him, and this conviction makes me sadder still. . . . I loved him for his fiery spirit, his rough cordiality, his integrity, his contempt of shams, his clear understanding, the extent of his knowledge, his real enthusiasm, and his penetrating glance; his sharp angles did not hurt me, and his

weak points were partially veiled, though not so closely, but that I often suspected them, and sometimes recognised them with dismay. Such as they were, however, (I saw them first and very early, in his unaccountable bestowal of confidence on unworthy persons,) they rather affected the minister than the man; had we worked together in ordinary times, they would have had no injurious consequences in the business I had to transact, and my connexion with him would have been a bright spot in my life. He was never reserved, never enigmatical; he did not receive expressions of warm attachment as a due homage, but welcomed them; he returned them fully, and valued them highly. He seized the whole character at a grasp, and did not pick out this, and that, and the other quality in a man, in order to determine their value and weigh them against others. I shall never forget with what reluctance he took leave of me in Memel: he called me back time after time, said I must not go yet, and after all, we did not suppose it a final parting. At that parting we were truly friends, as truly as persons can become so *after their first youth;* the unions we form then are indeed of a different character from any of later years. He also wrote me very affectionate letters afterwards. When he came to Berlin, in the spring, their tone altered; he seemed already to be under foreign influences, his views became distorted; I wrote fiery words in reply, and his old affection came forth again from its disguise. But the length of our separation may have weakened it,—or was it the influence that seems to have taken possession of him at that time? Since the spring his letters lost their former tone of familiarity; we retained our business connexion with each other, and who knows but that the former ties might have been restored if we had been brought together again? For some mysterious change must have taken place in him during the interval. You know that his successor* and I became good friends while we were colleagues. His character is amiable and very upright; he possesses a feeling heart, more sentiment than passion, an unequal amount of knowledge on many

* Altenstein.

questions, which will hardly admit of being treated separately, too much of the routine of a system, scarcely that penetrating eye, by which a statesman ought to be able to take in all the outward bearings, and inward import of a question with a glance; but the best choice that could be made, and one in which I should rejoice under less hopeless circumstances; though his systematising, and his slow way of going through every step in a chain of reasoning, often hinder the despatch of business. However, this will not be of any consequence to me now, as, on many accounts, my retirement from public affairs is rendered desirable, indeed almost necessary. I must at once take measures to prevent injury to my reputation from the ill-success of plans which I know to be impracticable; and I really cannot place myself in the dilemma, of either undertaking a responsibility in the guidance of affairs under such hopeless circumstances, or finding myself a mere nullity, or unavailing unit amidst opposing voices of equal weight; consequently I must retire. It is no unimportant step: I feel all that it involves; but even if the end of our State is not so near that, whether a little sooner or later, it will be reduced to its former attitude at Königsberg, perhaps in a still worse place, I assure you it would go hard with me to eat my daily bread in security, as a not absolutely necessary servant of the State, while the country is in such misery. It seems that many would be pleased at my retirement, for intrigues and cabals are not less rife or less malignant, when a state is sunk to the lowest point of degradation. Massenbach's account of Prince Hohenlohe's joy at being named general-in-chief of a disorganised army, that was visibly hastening within a few days to complete destruction, is extremely striking and remarkable.—Altenstein, and probably the King, are perhaps the only ones who would see me depart with regret. Altenstein has less rigid principles with regard to the payment of public servants, than I, who have a more republican belief in the obligation to serve, if we can be of use; my invincible feelings seem to him over-scrupulousness; however, I do not know how he will reconcile his pressing invitations to me to return, with the organisation of the new

government, which seems to have been formed without any reference to me. D. appears to know more altogether about the cabals against me than I myself, who can only have a presentiment of them; he will probably have told you a good many things too.

And here have I been saying not a little upon subjects to which I only meant to allude. . . . .

Through the circulating library, which is our great resource here, my attention has been accidentally turned once more to French literature, which we foreigners may well take under our protection, since it is now the fashion among the French themselves to decry their own literature, with the exception of the poets of the age of Louis XIV., as the production of hell. Massillon's "Petit Carême," the sublimity and splendour of which you know, (and if you do not know this book, you must read yourself, and may read most of it to Charles, and recommend it to Dora,) induced me to read his "Histoire de la Minorité de Louis XV.;" a book which, in my opinion, is not only the best historical work in the French literature, but is not inferior to any in any other modern language, and may be compared to the ancients. The grace of the style is inimitable; the descriptions are speaking truth; the proportion in the distribution of parts harmonious; the apothegms full of deep significance; and the verdicts passed, those of a great statesman. The judgment which the Bishop of Clermont pronounces upon subjects of finance, might put to shame nearly all the ministers who have no other vocation: but that is the true test of a great man, that from his eminence he can survey all fields. The whole work displays a spirit of elevated purity, the real human sentiments which animate his sermons also, his classical cast of thought, and the truthfulness of a man who is at one with himself,—his freedom from all bonds of class and opinion, strong as was his own faith, his love of liberty, his correct appreciation of the duties of this world;—finally, it breathes throughout, the exquisitely beautiful spirit of the "Petit Carême;"—the spirit, which in his Orations, gave rise to that delineation of the times of

Louis XIV., which must have made his hearers tremble, as the great man, scarcely guessing their feelings, poured forth his own soul. This description is annexed to the "Histoire." I am certain that, if you ever read it, it was so long ago that your memory can tell you little about it. Take this golden book in hand, beg Dora to read it also, and place it among your books, not beside the writers of his own nation—except perhaps Diderot and Montesquieu—but beside Thucydides and Sallust: if you have it not, lose no time in procuring it. The discovery of such a pearl gives me a day of delight, and you need such days. But do not speak of it to those of your order; Massillon was no friend to that; on the contrary, he abhorred it. The noble who cannot bear this, had better not attempt to read him. . . . .

This autumn I have read Schiller's "History of the Thirty Years' War," and, time after time, I have raised my hands in astonishment, not in admiration of the work, O by no means! but in wonder at the possibility that a book like this, which is not even tolerably well-written, and in which the narrative never flows smoothly on, but is ever halting and stumbling, should be allowed to rank as a classical work. Time will assuredly do justice to it, and allow the thing to sink into oblivion. . . . .

CXII.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

AMSTERDAM, *February 26th*, 1809.

. . . . . I have made a very interesting acquaintance in Valckenaer,* who was formerly ambassador from Holland to

* Valckenaer was the son of the celebrated philologist. His literary fame, and still more his opposition to the Orange party, procured him the professorship of Jurisprudence in Utrecht, in 1767. He was one of the deputation who went to Paris to request the assistance of the Convention, in 1795. He remained in connexion with the government up to the resignation of King Louis, when he also retired from public life. It is somewhat remarkable, that Niebuhr should have formed so close a friendship with a man so completely identified with the principles of the Revolution. They continued to correspond after Niebuhr left Holland, and a series of his letters to Valckenaer are still in existence, which his friends have made many efforts to procure, but hitherto without success.

Spain. He is a Frisian, a man of uncommon intellect, and possessing a vivacity, and a power of taking interest in a wide circle of subjects, which are very unusual here. From his father he inherits noble philological attainments, and it is the first time, at least for many years, that I have met with an intellectual man conversant with ancient literature; as familiarly acquainted with Rome and the classics, as, for instance, we Germans, or other nations possessing a literature, are with their own literature and history, and with whom I could converse on a footing of equality. For all the other more eminent philologists I have known, assume an abominable air of initiation which I by no means concede to them. Valckenaer has moved about in the world a great deal, and has another key to the meaning of ancient authors beside grammar, and looks, too, for other things in them besides antiquities and words. Our views are very much alike. He has been a man of much ambition and violent passions, and his life has been full of storms. In his house lives an old poet, also a Frisian, named Van Kooten, who has written charming Latin poems, an achievement, the value of which we must not underrate, when the rare case occurs, that a poetical genius has so completely mastered one of the ancient languages, as to use it with perfect freedom. In such a case it is not mere sport nor affectation, and if a poet, as must happen if he is born in Holland, finds himself forced to choose between a thoroughly plebeian idiom—possessing, however, forms and rules of poetry, which he cannot break through without losing the tone, to which he and all his nation have been accustomed from childhood—and an ancient language and forms of poetry, which are indeed absolutely inviolable, and therefore true fetters, but were created by the most exquisite sense of beauty—he will do best service to his genius, I think, by choosing the latter and more difficult course. There still exist a good many composers of Latin verses here, and one passes for a great poet; Van Kooten is, however, the only real poet among them. We Germans are happily not limited to such a choice. . . . .

CXIII.

MELDORF, *4th May*, 1809.

. . . . We have found all our friends here pretty well. My father is not much altered, a little paler, much blinder, and it seems as if his blindness had led him to indulge in melancholy reveries in his hours of solitude, which have impaired his cheerfulness. This disposition to groundless anxiety he had indeed before; it relates principally to the imprudent manner in which his property has been frittered away, about which we strive to set him at rest. It is touching to hear his unjust reproaches of himself, for having neglected different objects in his travels. Thus are we always most apt to censure ourselves, for not having accomplished to the uttermost what lay before our hands, and was the easiest part of our work; while we overlook our neglect of what was more important, but what we had to find out for ourselves. I have always regretted for him, and still regret, that on his return with such an abundant store of observations and discoveries, the worth of which could scarcely have been affected by a few facts more or less, he closed his active life, and did not rather, when equipped with all this knowledge, undertake some learned work. Hence it is, that his spirit has long languished under a sense of indigence, like a man who has given away a fortune, earned with hard labour under a conjunction of circumstances that cannot again arise. He does not guess the cause of his inward dissatisfaction; he never did. And woe be to him who should open his eyes to it!

On our journey we found papers, which heightened the painful anticipations with which we had left Nütschau, by the depressing intelligence they contained. Since we have been here, we received, along with more recent papers, a letter from our obliging friend, containing the enclosed: *—

The events that have come to pass grieve me deeply,

* This enclosure contained an account of the occurrences of the war from the 19th to the 24th April, at Ratisbon, &c.

and almost destroy all my hopes. Even if the news of Hiller's victory* be confirmed, that will do little towards retrieving our affairs, for I can hardly believe the possibility of a junction being effected between him and the Grand Duke, if the latter has really crossed the Danube, which he must have done at Ratisbon. After the faults that have been already committed, we can scarcely look for great results, even if this better contingency prove to be the real state of the case. On the other hand, very great misfortunes are possible, if the contrary be true; although it is evident that the organisation of the army has been much improved, and probable that the courage and energy of the Austrians answer to the manifestations of their government, and that these last are really, what they always ought to be, the fruit, and the faithful mirror of their internal sentiments.

Victory was evidently so near! And then all had been saved! Then should we have entered on a life which we should not have dragged along as a weary burden. But armies are still entrusted to boys because they are the sons of princes; divisions to generals who have outlived captivity; and he who feels in himself that he could counsel and lead, remains in the background, not only because of a thousand miserable considerations, but because the hour of dissolution is not yet come in which he would press forward! I have, as you will see, guessed the whole of his plan at a hundred leagues distance; that those, who were immediately opposed to him, have not done so is plain. . . . .

Read in Gibbon the history of Majorian; behold a man who surpassed in virtue all the emperors that had sat on the throne of Rome, who yielded to none in talent and valour, who still had at his command a powerful army, small only when compared to that of former times; see how he not merely understood the art of government, how he perceived that he could only help the nation by granting them a due measure of freedom; but even if he had not died early, and under suspicious circumstances, he could have availed nothing against the influences of his age, and for

* Over the Bavarians, under Wrede, at St. Verti, April 24th.

him individually death was a blessing—the highest blessing. He died in the enjoyment of a delusive hope in the possibilities of the future. . . . .

CXIV.

MELDORF, *14th May*, 1809.

A strong desire to relieve my bitter grief and comfortless affliction, by freely pouring forth my feelings to you, has, day after day, been forced to yield to the pressure of engagements which assail us on every side. . . . .

I am constantly asking myself here, whether we are really living in the same age of the world that we did formerly, when we calmly reckoned beforehand on the future, or built castles in the air; or whether all before us is not, as it seems to our eyes, Chaos and Night,—a universal destruction of all that now exists?

My old father never comprehends, nor dreams, that my outward circumstances are a house of cards. He comforts himself with the idea that we shall want for nothing! For his own sake, I try to prepare him for the contrary, but whenever it comes, it will be a terrible surprise to him. . . .

Schill's desperate step will, I fear, quite decide the fate of Prussia. It is only a legitimate consequence, and the last for which I would blame the Emperor. For he will say to us: "Either you gave your consent to it, or you did not; if you did, you are my enemies; if you did not, you are no longer a State, because you can no longer control your own subjects."

Is Schill an adventurer, or a great man? In any case he is a fortunate man, even if he fall. It is the first new and unheard-of thing that has been done for many years. The dissolution of all civil bonds and institutions is completed: now must begin either universal death and putrefaction, or the heavings of a new life. But where are its germs?

Which excites our indignation the most: he who applauds the desperate man as he would a rope-dancer, because the spectacle amuses him; or he who chides him for his recklessness?

I cannot, in common prudence, set off for Berlin now. Napoleon is probably already in Vienna. Do you not love the Tyrolese? Their leaders are plebeians.

CXV.

NÜTSCHAU, *25th July*, 1809.

. . . The faculty of simple endurance, mere passivity under the pressure of a heavy calamity, this beautiful and noble power, to the practice and development of which you exhort me, is unfortunately more foreign to my disposition, than almost any other kind of power that can be nourished and strengthened by exercise. But be assured that I shall go forward towards the future, not only undaunted, but for the present consoled: even should we be summoned to Königsberg before the consequences of this mischance have had time to develope themselves.

Moltke became still more unwell in Hamburgh, and came on here before us very much indisposed. To-day, thank God, he is beginning to improve.

We are not yet properly settled down here. I will tell you in my next how I get on with my studies, towards which I feel a strong desire attracting me, but which are now rendered difficult from long disuse.

I have no inclination to say much to you about the dreadful decision of this great judgment-day of the world. You know as much about it as I do, and our sentiments are the same.* The sacrifice of the Tyrol drove me to despair; but I was ready to believe it at the first report, it was so exactly like him, so completely in accordance with his system of dragging his victims through the dirt, and making them as contemptible as possible; just as the boa constrictor covers his prey with his slime, to swallow it with the greater ease. But it is a hard task to learn how to live quite without hope; almost harder still to see the hopes that had revived, crushed to the earth again. Gallicia, even Terrol and

* This letter would refer to the armistice of Znaym, concluded between the Archduke Charles and Napoleon, on the 12th of July.

Corunna, were evacuated. Romana had a well-disciplined army of 30,000 men. The armies in Estremadura were united; that from Sicily had most likely already landed in Catalonia, the great expedition to Bayonne or Biscaya was decided on. So completely did salvation hang on the turn of a straw! This is the time when the elect are proved; he who has endured to the end will have a bright evening to his life. But for the present—happy are those who have never withdrawn themselves too far from the calling and work, which can now be to the individual his only consolation! Such feel many things much less acutely than he who has irrevocably bound up his own destiny with political life. Happy, too, are they who have early resigned themselves to trouble; and, like you, have learnt in other ways and former times, to bear the yoke and cross.

In other respects I have no cause for complaint. The last blow has not greatly affected my health, my hopes hung on such a slender thread. The thought of the wounded—of the inhabitants trampled under foot by their conquerors—of the Tyrolese—is more than the heart can bear. And the aspect of the future for all of us who are now parted, and shall soon be still more widely separated from each other, is indeed, very grave.

It is very beautiful here at this season; but it is the first time that we have been here without you, and O how we miss Marie!

CXVI.

NÜTSCHAU, *3rd August*, 1809.

You will be anxious to hear from us. The pressing necessity for rest and recreation, which you have too often traced in my looks, may assure you that Moltke's society, the quiet of this place, and the pure country air, would do me good. Many a chord that has been vibrating with sharp and yet sharper pain for years, till its power of endurance was exhausted, rests and slumbers here, where there is neither the fever of constant rumours and news, nor the consuming passions of intercourse with the great world to torment me.

I succeed in the attempt to keep myself from the contemplation of things for which there is no consolation, and even from thinking seriously about our own fate, while I withdraw my thoughts from the more remote present, into the narrower circle of the present that surrounds me at this moment. I succeed in re-awaking many interests that had long lain dormant, many of my half-forgotten ideas; and the fresh breezy air, the corn fields, the woods, the meadows, infuse something of their life into me. Though I am still frequently unwell, seldom in good spirits, I yet feel that I am much better here in the open air, than I should be in a town, and that a return of health and enjoyment is not impossible.

However, I fancy that for the present I shall only attain to a negatively better state, which is certainly in comparison, a real good, but is far from being all that is wanted, and will, I fear, scarcely long outlive the external repose which has produced it. I have hardly as yet attained, even for single moments, to that free creative meditation on voluntarily chosen topics, lighted up by the glow of imagination, in which alone I can possess the full measure, and enjoy the satisfaction of all my faculties. Is it that I strive after an element which is not natural to me? The instinct that impels me towards it, can scarcely be an illusion; I should surely find satisfaction in a lower sphere, if that were my appointed place. But my wings are clipped, my limbs are become stiff for want of use, my mental habits have grown rigid, my will refuses to act, is awkward or heedless, while my accustomed mode of life impels the course of my thoughts in an opposite direction.

You will find it pardonable, though not conducive to the attainment of my objects, that the pile of books upon my table is continually increasing. For I have been too long denied the great enjoyment of a library, not to feel manifold temptations to revel in it now; and this, too, has in some respects its advantages. Only in this way, by striking a hundred chords that have lain silent for years, will my memory revive again, and without this revival, many things

would before long have been irrecoverably lost to me, which have now so faint an existence in my mind, that I am unable to call them up by a simple effort of the will. I even find it necessary to learn afresh by practice how to read and investigate on learned subjects, and this is the best way in which I can accumulate materials, if I should ever be fortunate as to produce anything.

I have been collecting contributions to the subject of my old studies, from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and pursuing the track of proof for my conviction, that in very early times a mutual acquaintance and traffic subsisted between Rome and Greece: he has also given me some helps towards a survey of the primitive races of western Europe. I have likewise read, with great admiration and respect (and are not these feelings among our most invigorating enjoyments ?) some of Mirabeau's papers on finance, which I had long been seeking in vain to procure. They have reminded me of some of the faults I have myself committed, which I long since recognised, and might have avoided, had I been earlier acquainted with his doctrines; but not less of the egregious blunders of others, before whose eyes this light was kindled, when they ought to have been mature enough to have profited by it, and whose infatuation was such that they chose rather to grope in darkness! And this then is the vaunted or imagined use of even great writers! His fatherland was deaf to him, and plunged into the abyss, which he had pointed out with a cry of terror, and the warning of example as well as of truth was lost on other rulers!

I am reading the very remarkable physico-philosophical writings of Baader, which are pervaded by a spirit of the wildest mysticism, and in general are undoubtedly as mischievous as they are effete, by reason of their obscurity. For indubitable as it must be to any one, who cannot satisfy himself with definitions and explanations, which are nothing better than reasoning in a circle, that there exists a wisdom and a truth above the sphere of our sciences, a wisdom and truth which bear the same relation to them as the living

creature does to its delineation, yet we are none the less incapable of divining truth without these sciences; and the transient forecastings and glimpses, which present themselves to us at times, have their truth and deeper significance only in and through the steady, intelligent keeping in view of the boundaries of science; apart from science they become day-dreams and castles in the air. To excite an interest in these presentiments before the need of them is felt, or the capacity of calling them up exists, is a dangerous gift, and it were to be wished that such views should be revealed in mysteries to the initiated, and to none besides. Just as with views regarding freedom and civil institutions, where the best is remote indeed from the actual, and yet it does not follow that the latter is altogether inadmissible for the time being, or that the former is capable of being put in practice. Nevertheless, I recommend these treatises to you, that is, all those which do not form part of the system of natural philosophy which appears to me, to say the least, extremely adventurous and dizzy; particularly all respecting subjects whose elucidation can be assisted by profound meditation, elevation of feeling, searching observation, and a pure and warm heart; for all these my mystic possesses.

I read Horace also daily; he is my constant companion, and dearer to me than ever. . . . .

CXVII.

HAMBURGH, *29th August*, 1809.

On the opposite side I wrote you, in the first glow of my feelings, the details of intelligence that will not leave you unmoved, for it relates deeds to which our age was a stranger, and a result which, up to this time, had been denied to the noblest enterprises.*

Whether this ray of light will reach germs which only awaited warmth to burst forth into life, is another question. For my own part, I begin to cherish the encouraging belief

* The successes of the Tyrolese, who had in July succeeded in completely establishing their independence, and were at this time governed by the peasant Hofer.

that many hearts have grown purer and stronger, through danger and suffering, and that on all sides there lives a spirit, though straitened and repressed, whose power must increase, and produce something far better than that dull, comfortable existence, which B. describes as the golden age of thirty years ago. It was from the insufficiency of this, that the aimless striving after something beyond arose, which, combined with the universal effeminacy, led to the miserable results which he describes as constituting our later condition, and which we have all experienced. If God would take pity on us, I almost believe we might, though with bitter grief and pain, attain to something much better than that former state. We are indeed standing at the parting of two roads, where the most probable amongst the many possible contingencies is that we shall have to endure the double sorrow of seeing this flame, which has been secretly growing more and more intense, extinguished by oppression. Much indeed would still remain to us in the very consciousness of our loss, and in this instance I entreat you not to listen to the voice of your heart, but to strive against that tendency of your mind to analysis, in which you have more than once sought consolation, when we have been conversing about the misery of our times, present and future. The value of every earthly good and happiness may indeed be explained away by reasoning, just because what makes it good and lovely is not a thing belonging to the region of ideas, and cannot be founded on ideas alone; but unless you can completely transfer yourself into Klinger's * cold intellect, it seems to me, that even in the clearest mind this must introduce a false state of feeling, which may indeed suffice for present comfort, but is not good in itself. Forgive me this warning! It is the only one which I think you may need, on account of your propensity to solve every thing by reasoning.

* A poet of the last and present century. In his earlier productions the passions reign supreme; in later years a kind of reaction took place, and he placed stern decision of character and moral energy above all things. The struggles and difficulties of his own life had imparted, moreover, a degree of bitterness to his judgment of others and of the world in general.

Perhaps, too, I warn you because I envy you this faculty, though I would not wish to make use of it.

In this case, I would fain see you become the advocate among your friends of that which as yet scarcely begins to stir in the bosom of night, but whose existence is certain, for they are far too much inclined to look for and to see salvation in the dead remains of the past. Let them not (I refer particularly to L. Stolberg) regard what still exists on the surface of things, and is the tottering wreck of an age gone by, as the only possession left to us. Let them reflect that it is not the Known, in what remains, that can profit us; that this is everywhere simply injurious; but the hidden things which must be brought to light, and are here and there forcibly breaking their way; that a single spontaneous stirring is worth more than a thousand oscillating movements of worn-out and decrepit forms. Who could have dreamed that we should see the days of Morgarten and Naefel once more? Who can deny that the Tyrolese have stepped from childhood into manhood since 1790-7-9, 1800, 1805? Who can doubt that the spirit of the Spaniards, the martyr-spirit of the Holy Father, his anathema pronounced at the high altar in the midst of the French soldiery, have elevated the hearts of the Tyrolese; that their example will re-act upon the Spaniards, teaching them to disregard the prejudices of birth, and rewarding them for their sufferings? For they cannot but feel that they themselves have sown this seed-corn. Have you heard the following? When Lanne's adjutant came to Saragossa to summon the city to surrender, he found the assembled junta in the act of going to the cathedral, whither the president requested him to follow them. Two thousand armed men marched in military order into the church, and the envoy asked the president what it meant. "Give the marshal this answer to his summons," replied he, "that these are the sentinels on duty to-day, who have come to hear mass to prepare themselves for death: this is done every day." Were but the right impulse given from above, we should see great things likewise among other nations, in every nation, according to the measure of its capacity for greatness.

I go to Prussia with a heavy heart. Besides, I dread the exhausting effects of the journey, from which I shall have no time to rest, but must enter forthwith upon business that will be troublesome and painful in many ways; I dread the distressing scenes on the road, and the effect of our stay in Königsberg and the climate there upon my health. But there is no help for it.

I must have left unsaid much that I had wished to say to you. I was introduced to Villers yesterday; we met on both sides with a favourable prepossession. He seems to me to be a truly intellectual and upright man. . . . .

CXVIII.

KÖNIGSBERG, 21*st September*, 1809.

You cannot have looked more eagerly for tidings from us than we have been wishing to write to you since our departure from Berlin. But during the journey it was not possible to write; we travelled too quickly. . . . .

We took the route through Frankfort, Londsberg, and straight across West Prussia to Marienwerder. From the frontiers of Neumark to the Vistula the old Polish barbarism reigns over this territory, which has scarcely ever, until lately, been trodden by the foot of a stranger. On the Bromberg road every thing had already assumed a German aspect. Here, even in the so-called towns, you scarcely see any thing but walls of planks with gaping chinks, and roofs thatched with brushwood; a look of wretchedness which is not the offspring of poverty alone, but of habitual contentment with a low animal condition. The same mode of life prevails also among the Germans, by whom I found, to my surprise, the whole tract as far as Conitz inhabited. Even the churches are as wretched as the dwelling-houses. The soil is indeed, also, very bad; many of the fields only produce the double of what is sown; and the whole region reminds one of the wildest parts of North America, for the thinly scattered villages, with the fields belonging to them, are only spots of cleared land in the vast forest still inhabited by the wolves and wild boars. The aspect of the country

improves immediately on crossing the boundaries of West Prussia, at the point where the rule of the Teutonic knights introduced, four centuries ago, a culture which the Polish sway has never been able entirely to efface. The wilderness I have mentioned belongs to the valley of the Netz. At Neuenburg, and still more at Marienburg, our admiration was excited by the remains of the monuments of those extraordinary men, which are Roman in their grandeur; the churches, and, at the latter place, the castle of the Grand Master of the order, are *chef d'œuvres* of the most beautiful Gothic architecture. In this place we also saw the tombs of these great men,—and the barbarism of the late masters of the country, who have turned the principal building of the castle into a magazine. As we approached Marienwerder, we saw the beautiful levels—there, no fens, but an accumulation of rich light soil—a succession of contiguous orchards. Here, the frequent recurrence of newly-repaired houses and fences showed that the ravages of war had been great, but energy and industry had already restored the former appearance of things. In the much more fertile levels of Marienburg, also, the small number of cattle was the only trace left of devastation. But on this side Elbing, the general misery was but too visible; not so much in the remains of ruined houses, or wide tracts of land left untilled—of these I only saw a few unequivocal instances,—but by much more frightful tokens,—the tattered garments and famished look of the inhabitants, the wretched huts that numbers had erected by the roadside, and from which they came forth as we passed, with looks that bespoke their misery, though they did not complain, but thanked us eagerly for the alms we gave them. By universal testimony, they are a very good set of people here. We found among our friends at Braunsberg the cheerfulness which is inspired by great activity, and much rejoicing over the new corporation — Stein's work, from whom all the towns have received an independent municipal constitution, the worth of which is best appreciated by the citizens of a town like this, which was a free town up to 1772. Our venerable friend, Oestreich, was chosen

president by his fellow-citizens, and elected by his native town and *all* the towns in Ermland, as their representative in the Diet—a reward for his many years' faithful and active service which is with justice dear to him. I shall send you some copies of his simple and beautiful speech for the Reventlows, &c., that you may all become better acquainted with the noble character of a man whom we esteem so highly, and who has been the distributor of your alms. It contains, also, a very lucid explanation of this new institution—the only plan that has been carried into execution, out of a universal system of free administration which has been frustrated. In these parts, all classes are exerting themselves to repair the ravages of war. Heiligenbeil, too, with its suburb, is, for the most part, rebuilt; but it is quite otherwise in the more remote districts higher up the Passarge. There, whole villages, and numerous farmhouses (which are here generally built very badly, even on noblemen's estates), have entirely disappeared; and in many which are still partly standing, the population has been almost or altogether exterterminated by pillage, hunger, and pestilence. In one of these villages, there is only one girl left out of the whole population. The towns, portions of which are in ashes, are in an equally deserted state, and all the inhabitants of this part of the country are plunged into like poverty. It is generally anticipated that nearly all the landed proprietors will become bankrupt, and that property will entirely change hands; a great calamity, because those who grow rich in times of war and misery, are nearly always the worst members of society. The people do not derive much help from the abundant harvest, because prices are so low, and the freights for export so enormously high. One remarkable phenomenon is the Associations for the Good of the People which have sprung up within the last year. They are composed of all classes, and their object is the restoration of prosperity, by uniting their efforts to improve all hitherto neglected sources of wealth. Where this is carried out in such a spirit as at Braunsberg, it certainly deserves all praise.

I should have much to say to you about ourselves, if I could trust the post. As it is, I can only say this much,—that the outward position of the State is discouraging, and its internal condition anything but admirable.

I find nothing decided respecting my appointment. Violent party-spirit divides my most intimate acquaintance. Some are impelled, by their resentment at Stein's conduct, to utter bitter invectives against him which cut me to the heart. It is absolutely impossible to arrive at any well-founded conviction respecting the grounds of these charges against Stein, and equally so to get a reliable account of the last moments of his official life, and the occurrences that led immediately to the fatal result. Even men of the greatest veracity make statements which are entirely irreconcilable with each other, in many separate particulars. . . . .

CXIX.

KÖNIGSBERG, *28th September*, 1809.

I wrote to you from Nütschau, that, in spite of Milly's unbelief, I was determined this time to have faith. The result has not justified my hopes. I have had a notable proof that respect and attachment, even when they are accompanied by a kind heart, and, through long intercourse, have assumed the colour of friendship, afford a weak pledge for actions, if their possessor is not free from selfishness. However, I should probably soon succeed in opening for myself a fair career of mental activity in this place if tolerable apartments were to be obtained. Besides this, I feel very seriously, and even depressingly, the effects of the last three years, during which my life has been constantly unsettled, and my movements determined by others. Such a life has no inward vitality; it is like a flower plucked from its parent stem—it fades, and leaves no seed behind.

I find everything here much what I had expected from my former experience. One day slips away after another, without leaving any trace of its existence; there is no earnestness, no steady contemplation: it is like the life of a worldling,

who is wasting in a consumption, expecting death and a fearful eternity, and yet shrinks from the pain of turning his thoughts upon himself. This universal tone of feeling (some exceptions of course there are) is to me the most shocking possible, and it gives me an indescribable feeling of oppression to see it prevailing all around me. By the side of this, it is frightful to perceive the general self-complacency, and the opinion of many that everything possible and needful is being done,—that anything more would produce evil.

Humboldt, the king of letters, I have only seen once as yet. His reception of me was most friendly. I had expected indeed to derive much instruction from his conversation. He asked very kindly after Moltke.

There is much that is very beautiful about Pantheism, in the wider sense of the term, to be found in Schelling's philosophical writings, in his Researches into Freedom.* In reading this treatise I can perfectly enter into his system, but to mould my own mind into it, would be quite impossible. Besides, I shudder at the presumptuous attempt to scale heaven, even by piling mountains on mountains, much as I delight in the wide-spread prospect from their heights. This treatise deserves to be widely read; it is clearly written, and full of thought. Its defects are those inseparable from the nature of the rash and fruitless attempt to set limits to the Infinite. Still I have felt myself, for some time past, more strongly attracted than ever I was before to the search after the Real, the Living, and on this account I have enjoyed reading it. In many parts I have recognised, with great pleasure, the inmost convictions of my brightest hours. But I cannot ascend to the summit of his philosophy upon his ladder, nor fly upon the wings of others. There are some strong, and almost bitter expressions attacking Schlegel's "Review of Stolberg's Church History," which I also think an unsatisfactory performance, though on other grounds, I can by no means reconcile myself to this method of interpreting the Old Testament, which is in such direct oppo-

* Philosophical Researches into the Essence of Human Freedom; published in May, 1809.

sition to my feeling of historical criticism, that it is the greatest obstacle in the way of my faith. If Lord Chatham's letters to his nephew, Thomas Pitt, fall in your way, read them; you will spend a pleasant hour in contemplating the picture they afford of paternal tenderness, and the urbanity of a truly great man. Have you read Goethe's "Benvenuto Cellini?" Though I found fault with you for setting too high a value upon mere power, or cherishing an overweening predilection for it, (I may, however, have been unjust towards you on this point,) this man will interest us both equally. Nowhere can you find a more vivid picture of the artist's great era than in this biography, and with mournful feelings do you watch it fading away with the hero, and see him outlive it. There are coarse, and worse than coarse passages in the book, but you will easily avoid them by referring to the table of contents.

I have found a fellow-admirer of the Faust, in Prince Radziwill, and his admiration does not remain as barren as mine. He has set to music all the passages adapted for singing; but though the music is very touching, I cannot be persuaded that Gretchen's song at her spinning-wheel is a suitable subject for a high style of composition. That is to say, I should prefer something extremely simple. I am quite delighted with his delicate sense of every beauty, though he is no German. I am curious to know whether Villers really, *bonâ fide*, understands and likes the Faust? Vanderbourg has written some great nonsense about it.

In this unprecedented state of the world, individual character assumes a greater distinctness of outline than in any previous age, and a few exhibit a firmness, decision, and truthfulness, such as was perhaps rarely to be met with in former times.

I have been studying Davy's "Chemical Discoveries" with great interest. They open to us a hitherto closed sanctuary. My only fear is, that men will again content themselves with standing at the door.

CXX.

KÖNIGSBERG, 11*th December*, 1809.

In our last we said it was not likely you would receive another letter from us dated from this place; but I will not so far yield to the pressure of business and interruptions, as to leave, without bidding you yet another farewell. My old impulse to communicate to you without delay everything of consequence that concerns us, will not let me wait a day before telling you that this morning my fate has been decided, as I have received my appointment as Privy Councillor of State, and head of the section for the management of the National Debt and Monetary Institutions, in conjunction with L'Abaye. This double appointment is an anomaly committed at my request, in order to avoid a very injurious division of the public business, and to anticipate and prevent the mortification, which an old and deserving servant of the state might otherwise possibly feel. I receive no increase of salary, because I think it a sin at the present moment to accept more than I absolutely require, though all my colleagues have had their salaries raised 2,000 dollars per annum. Since, however, there will now be many fresh sources of expense and new taxes, I shall really be worse paid for my services than I was three years ago; and therefore shall accept with all the better conscience, an official residence now standing empty, which, moreover, M. Von Stein had three years ago destined for my use, together with an addition to my salary of 1,000 dollars, which I have never applied for, and now resign entirely. I am sure we shall be able to manage by making use of the interest of our capital.

I have been persuaded for some time, that this would be the issue of affairs with us, and therefore did not hesitate to meet a proposal made to me, by the Carlsruhe cabinet to enter their service as vice-president, with the answer that I expected shortly to receive a permanent appointment, and only in the opposite case could I, or would I, entertain the idea of leaving this country. The

picture of the beautiful country, the southern climate, and the milder air, is not without its charms to me; but I long for a permanent position and occupations, and for rest; and I am attached to this government and nation, by the bonds of common sentiments and common sufferings. I should have felt myself a foreigner there; as I shall do, perhaps, in Berlin; for as yet I only feel at home in the land of my youth. I feel at this moment, when all is decided, as a bride might feel, who had given her hand away on well-considered reasons.

Will you believe—I know you will—that the outward show of the post I have just received has not for a moment attracted or pleased me? I feel that I am free from that ambition, which received its hateful name from the presumed existence of a bad motive,—but not from that which springs from the feeling and consciousness of a vocation to action and power; this no one can censure. I commiserate the nation, and I feel a calling to alleviate its misery, even if its greatest evils admit of no remedy. The object of my wishes and plans is to save the poor state-creditors, (who are in the greatest extremity and have received no interest for years,) without the necessity of imposing fresh burdens upon the nation; to satisfy the most sacred claims of thousands of sufferers; to regulate the provincial debts, so as to relieve the poor inhabitants; and to save the landed proprietors. I trust that the restoration of the paper currency to its full value will be the result of one of the plans I have drawn up. Outward events may frustrate these undertakings at their very commencement; the difficulties which their details present to myself, I feel that I am strong enough to conquer, for the importance of their object inspires energy and power; no one can lay anything to my charge, and a definite vocation is a fulcrum by which your lever can raise any weight. And even if your enterprise only succeeds to a certain extent, so long as you cannot attribute its partial failure to your own indolence, you have a sweet reward—you sleep in peace and your heart is at rest, even amid bitter disappointments and irreparable losses. If I were to talk in this style to others,

it might be called boastful and ostentatious; it is not so to you, with whom I am used to talk as with my own heart.

We begin our journey to-morrow by way of Pillau and Dantzic; the best route there is, though it is bad enough. . . .

CXXI.

TO HIS FATHER.

STETTIN, *22nd December*, 1809.

. . . . I had made up my mind to accept no post, in which the execution of my plans would have been committed into other hands, for I know that these plans are salutary, and I feel an unequivocal vocation to render help to this suffering nation. The administration of finance is not a science that can be learnt by studying a system; it is in reality an art. Many of its rules cannot be reduced to the principles of a system, even in the hands of those who have the clearest practical acquaintance with them; besides, there are a hundred arts and knacks connected with its management, which one can only find out for oneself, by actual experiment, and long practice. I am conscious of possessing this art, and venture to say, moreover, that I know very few who are more than bunglers in it. It would be bad indeed, if I did not possess it, seeing that its acquisition has cost me the best years and the true vocation of my life. While I was in Copenhagen, indeed, I only practised it as an apprentice; still, I shall always reproach myself that, through my weakness and desire to oblige, the views which I saw to be correct were not carried into effect. It does not silence my conscience on this point, that the structure I wished to rear was overthrown by terrible convulsions, when it had scarcely risen above the ground; for, with really wise institutions, even when their general fabric is shattered by calamity, some detached results remain; an attentive observer sees everywhere around him, even in common things, traces of the deeds and actions of long past centuries. The last few years, likewise,—weary, bitter years to me, during which I have constantly removed further and further from my earlier

sphere, — have not been lost as respects my progress in knowledge of this kind; but so much the more binding is the duty of putting in practice what I have learnt, especially considering the urgency of the present distress, in which every alleviation is a blessing. What is there left, too, for myself, but to act so as to have the comfort of this consciousness, since my favourite studies and favourite ideas are lost and gone? . . . .

[After giving an account of his colleague, L'Abbaye, and explaining their relative position, he proceeds as follows:]

My first business now, is to mark out and divide our respective departments. In general, my department includes the management of the national debt, home and foreign, the bank-notes or treasury bonds, the financial arrangements respecting the alienation of the crown lands, the investment of all the cash balances not immediately required, the collection of the outstanding debts due to the exchequer, the salt monopoly, and the banking operations of the state. From the personal confidence with which the minister, Count Dohna, honours me, I shall also exercise a general supervision over the public debts and systems of credit of the separate provinces, and over the private banks, which I propose to establish. The extent of my duties will thus be very great, and, unless my health keeps good, I shall scarcely be able to get through them. But with method and a retired life, arranged in all respects with reference to my work, I trust it will be possible to satisfy the demands of my conscience.

I have the great pleasure of finding that the ordinance I drew up respecting the treasury-bonds has made a very favourable impression on the public. They have already risen to 80, and there is no doubt they will be nearly at par in the course of two or three months. This change, which will extend the currency of the country by two or three millions, has been effected by a comparatively slight effort; and I hope that the payment of interest on the exchequer bills will be accomplished in the same way, without adding

to the burdens of the nation. I told you in my former letter, dear father, that I was convinced the Königsberg bonds would rise as soon as I was entrusted with the management of the national debt. My expectation was justified; they have risen in fact from 64 to 72. This proof of national confidence is to me the most flattering distinction I could have; and it is incredible how much popularity will accomplish in financial matters. If I succeed in being elected at the next renewal of a part of the municipal council of Berlin,—the so-called town deputies,—I hope to restore the credit of that city, now almost destroyed, by the same plan that I drew up for Königsberg. The new municipal institutions have worked very badly in many places, because the so-called people of rank have refused to take any share in them; but the spirit of these institutions is admirable, and will inevitably purify the mode in which they are carried out. But there must be an example given of a public officer of high standing who does not object to meet operatives and petty citizens as his equals in this connexion.

I hope, my dearest father, that neither you, nor any of our friends to whom you may communicate this letter (it will interest Behrens particularly), will think that my expressions savour of ostentation, or making a boast of juggling expedients. None of you can so mistake me, and whoever will believe my word, must believe me when I say, that I would willingly give all this popularity, to go back to the world in which I lived so happily in years gone by. Still, it is happiness to feel that you can alleviate misery, pave the way for what is good, and avert evil. When the heart is heavy, you feel that thus you can lay up joy in secret, and even in heaven. I have made a speculation for my poor Ermlanders, with moneys that would otherwise have lain useless in my coffers, which I hope will bring in upwards of 12,000 dollars. If so, they shall give joy to many a heart that has felt none these three years. . . . . .

CXXII.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, *27th January*, 1810.

. . . . The war has hitherto cost the remnant of our State not less than 100,000,000 dollars, and yet in the country parts here, things are scarcely worse than in many other places where the ravages of war did not reach; in the little towns, things are certainly much worse. I presume you will admit that commerce is a good thing, and the first requisite to the life of any nation. It appears to me that this much has now been palpably demonstrated, that an advanced and complicated social condition, like that in which we live, can only be maintained by establishing mutual relationships between the most remote nations, and that the limitation of commerce would, like the sapping of a main pillar, inevitably occasion the fall of the whole edifice; and also, that commerce is so essentially beneficial, and in accordance with man's nature, that the well-being of each nation is an advantage to all the nations which stand in connection with it. . . . .

CXXIII.

BERLIN, *16th February*, 1810.

. . . . I complained to you lately of the numberless hindrances and interruptions which deprive me of all the satisfaction I might otherwise derive from my official occupations. If it were not for these, which render it impossible for me to accomplish what I ought, and would like to do, my official duties would often afford me some gratification; though the ruins amidst which I have to clear a spot and commence a new edifice, are melancholy enough. As it is, however, the natural connexion between thought, action, and consequences, is quite broken, though my efforts are not wholly without success. Things of apparently little importance hinder or absolutely prevent the accomplishment of what is most essential. Another source of grief to me, lies in the

spirit in which the administration is carried on, and in the principles of the financial arrangements for the country at large, which are widely different from mine. Frugality, the utmost retrenchment of the public expenditure consistent with the due performance of the state services, and the just claims of individuals—the encouragement of all sources of wealth—the mildest possible taxation according to local and other circumstances—conscientiousness and judgment in the appointment of the subordinate officers of government, combined with a strict superintendence of them—are among the most indispensable conditions of an administration such as we need, which, however, any man must and will fail to carry out, who has not passed through a long course of preparation, and is not possessed of deep and penetrating wisdom.

Besides all this too, I must confess that my sorrow for the sacrifice of my inward life to this miserable finance often wakes up with renewed force. A consciousness how dearly any perfection in this art must be purchased by a man who is fit for something better, is probably the true reason, why so very few honest men have ever made themselves masters of it. This consciousness, with which I was vividly impressed with regard to official life in general, before I had entered on it, did not warn me, when after my entrance, a path opened to me towards finance. For a long time past, I have been almost unable to refresh myself by study, and yet the mind becomes sadly poverty-stricken when filled by no other thoughts than those arising from one monotonous occupation. This estrangement from my true life has now already lasted nearly three years and a half, and time tends ever onwards away from the forsaken shore, till return becomes impossible.

As yet I have seen very few of the learned men of this place.

I still consider our future as very precarious,—many times I doubt of it altogether; the Dutch loan, however, does something to render it more secure. Poor Holland is often in my mind, and fills me with compassion. I have little

doubt, however, that we shall drag along for a time in our present position. And so we trust that nothing in our fate will hinder us from seeing you here this summer, and receiving you—oh, with what joyful hearts!

The Countess Werthern is very weak; her sister has at last been set at liberty in Paris, and is now with her. Stein is said to be in Brünn, and in good spirits. It is said here that negotiations are going on for Hardenberg's recal.

CXXIV.

BERLIN, 27*th May*, 1810.

We want sadly to see you just now, that we might forget in your society the miserable position in which we are living. Hardenberg, who can scarcely at present enter the government openly as a minister, exercises, nevertheless, a sort of premiership in private. He is at a country-house about a mile-and-a-half from the city, where he is concocting measures on subjects of which he and his assistants are perfectly ignorant. The present ministry is, in fact, quite set on one side, and is sinking into exhaustion without having resolution to resign. . . . . I have remained firm to my conviction, that we must not use bad means, nor enter into companionship with the wicked, even for good ends; that an honest man, even should he possess sufficient skill to fight intriguers with their own weapons, must not do it, and that we must never suffer ourselves to be misled, by the hope of being useful, into doing what we should not be willing to avow openly. I leave the present ministry to defend itself; but being convinced that the actual state of things is injurious, and that the next step will not be an amendment, I have sent a very earnest representation of the state of the country to the King, pointing out its evils, and have requested my dismissal, and, at the same time, my appointment to the chair of history, in the University which will be opened here at Michaelmas.

Milly has been unwell for some days, &c., &c.

CXXV.

TO HIS FATHER.

BERLIN, *3rd June*, 1810.

Amelia has already written to you about my position, as it *ought* to be at present, and since then you will have read an official article on it in the "Hamburgh Correspondent," copied from the Berlin journal. I certainly am not so free from government business as I had wished, but am still connected with the finance department. However, I am no longer personally engaged in the Finance Commission, and the rest will no doubt settle itself in time. If, however, things should continue as they have been for the last week, during which my time has been completely taken up with composing reports on proposed measures, there is but little hope of improvement in my health or return to my studies. I particularly wish to resume the study of Arabic, to which my thoughts have been recalled by Lord Valentia. I have been reminded, too, how unpardonable it was in me to content myself, when in Copenhagen, with merely looking at the Chronicle of Zebid, which, from the contents of one chapter I remember, would doubtless enable us to fill up the gaps in the Abyssinian history of the middle ages, and probably throw light on that of the Mahommedan states. If things should remain quiet, and I am able to make use of the permission granted me to travel for literary purposes, I intend, therefore, as soon as I have revived my Arabic, to go to Copenhagen, in order to examine the Arabic MSS. there, and in particular this Chronicle.

As long, however, as I am occupied with business which must absorb any one who is not accustomed to work superficially, and am obliged to confer and associate so much with people who have no life beyond their official one, so long it is impossible for me to return to science as completely as I should wish. Still, a great step has been made towards the attainment of quiet.

It gives us the greatest pleasure, dearest father, that this termination of affairs does not annoy you, and that it seems

as though you, too, would be pleased to see me more decidedly devote myself to letters. . . . .

CXXVI.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, 1*st July*, 1810.

. . . . There are schemes afloat about which I cannot be silent. I have risked every thing by venturing to expose their essentially pernicious character, and even though the consequences to myself should be very unpleasant, I have never enjoyed a clearer conviction of having acted rightly and wisely. I am satisfied, that even if I fail in the attempt to stifle them in the birth, they will come into the world only half alive. My opposition, which, I am pleased to find, wins me respect in many quarters, gives others also time and courage to come forward, though I have long stood alone in my efforts to protect the State against their projects. Such opposition, has its dangers, and I have not been altogether without uneasiness. Yet I soon recovered my calmness in the consciousness that I stand or fall in a thoroughly good cause, and however things turn out, I shall never recal this time with regret, but rather dwell upon its memory with pleasure.

When this crisis is over, I hope to succeed in abstracting my thoughts from public affairs, and returning to my studies. We are at last expecting the arrival of my library, along with our other effects. When surrounded with my books, a few months will suffice to revive the images that have half faded from my memory, and then I must resume my pen—unless fate should have for ever denied me rest, as a punishment for having desired excitement and activity.

You are not far from us now, yet I scarcely dare to think of your coming to us as certain and near.

CXXVII.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.

BERLIN, 3*rd July*, 1810.

Dearest Moltke, I feel it to be one of the greatest advantages I derive from my partial liberation from public

business, to be able to answer the letter I received from you yesterday. A few weeks earlier it would have been impossible, from the causes which have overwhelmed me with a greater amount of correspondence than at any previous time since my return from Königsberg, and of a more unpleasant nature. But suffer me to pass over the period that is just closed; it has, however, been one of the darkest, perhaps quite the darkest, portion of my life. I was very ill at Königsberg, so ill that the foretaste of intellectual, if not of physical death was on my lips; I sank under the influences of the climate, combined with the bodily exhaustion produced by long-continued exertion of passionate intensity, and the disappointment of all my dearest hopes (allow me to attribute to my body a participation in the operations of my mind); and in this state I was forced to toil at Prussian *Citissime's*, accompanied by ponderous piles of deeds. There was nothing cheering to turn to; every thing excited bitterness and discontent; I was indeed in a new world—in the world of the coldest iron age. When I was only beginning to recover, I travelled hither at the worst season of the year; tried to conceal from myself how ill and exhausted I was; got stupefied with business and new faces; pushed and dragged at the rusty wheels of the machine till my hands were sore, and I was worn out with fatigue; continued constantly unwell; grew worse from time to time, and quite unfit for any sort of exertion: at last I got a little better, but by that time business had accumulated so that I had to work doubly hard till I fell ill again.

When the intrigues began, which have led to the present changes, (perhaps not yet ended,) I soon got an inkling that they might very likely issue in my release from the yoke of public life.

Your letter of the 25th of April, about the provincial system of credit, did not reach me till the end of May, and then—which quite puzzles me to conceive where it could have come from—bearing an address in a strange hand, and franked through Boitzenburg. You can neither have sent it from Hamburgh nor Kiel by that route. About the matter itself,

I can say little in a letter, and nothing in the space of a few lines; for it could only be suitably disposed of in a voluminous report, or a verbal discussion, and for the former I feel by no means inclined just as I have made my escape from business. I think that our system of credit, which reached a much greater extension than people seem to be aware of in your country, and at last kept in circulation mortgage notes to the amount of more than 54,000,000 dollars, has done much injury, by promoting a trade in land, although it has been, and still is, productive of some advantages. . . . .

Pray for free trade, for if you could export your wheat, barley, and oats, to foreign countries, you would be saved, just as in that case East Prussia might also recover from the war in the course of a few years.

None of the new works, with which the Leipsic fair has rejoiced your heart, are known to me as yet. With our heavy expenses, we are obliged to be very economical, and I deny myself new books like wine. The new edition of the original text of the "Nibelungen Lied" is the only thing lying before me, and that was sent me by the editor himself. In this form, this wonderful poem cannot fail of producing the greatest effect upon you. . . . .

CXXVIII.

TO HIS FATHER.

BERLIN, 21*st July*, 1810.

. . . . As Salt appears to be a very judicious and unassuming man, who will not in any way irritate and insult the feelings of the natives, I firmly believe that the embassy may be of the highest benefit to the Abyssinians, since they seem to be peculiarly prepared for the reception of European arts and civilisation. The only fear is, that the unseasonable activity of the London Missionary Society, which has disturbed the peace of India, might endanger there also the good understanding which would no doubt subsist at first between them and the English, from their not regarding the latter as Catholic Europeans. The Abyssinians, with their

lively curiosity, stand nearly on the same level as the Russians did before Peter the Great, and in their beautiful climate, civilisation may develope itself with more completeness and nationality than in Russia, where it has been spoilt by a bad model. That England will reap any political advantages, or even any considerable extension of her commerce, is very improbable. She might perhaps enlist some very serviceable soldiers there, but the entire trade of the country itself, and of that part of Africa to which Abyssinia would serve as an approach, can only employ a few ships, at least for many years to come. In the course of a century, perhaps a great market may be opened even in these regions, and this may be worthy of consideration in the policy of a state, which may calculate with security on a prolonged existence, unless it be destroyed from within.

No one certainly can deny that England is at this moment rapidly advancing in power and prosperity, but that she is safe from internal convulsions and changes, cannot be affirmed with equal certainty. The present ministers are not equal to the exigences of their position, and no internal prosperity can allay the discontent and fomentation arising from this circumstance, which may, too, lead to something much worse than the existing grounds of dissatisfaction, and yet ought not perhaps to be deprived of an outlet for expression. In times of extraordinary internal prosperity and great outward emergency, the absence of great men is almost as ruinous as in times of great calamity, and unquestionably England has never been so poor in great men as she is at the present moment. . . . .

CHAPTER VII.

NIEBUHR'S PROFESSORSHIP IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN, 1810 TO 1813.

NIEBUHR'S relinquishment of office, in 1810, forms an important epoch in his life. He was now thirty-four years of age, and since his twentieth year (with the exception of the sixteen months passed in England and Scotland), had been actively engaged in the public service. During this period he had indeed never lost sight of his philological researches, but he had only been able to devote to them his few hours of leisure; now, it was to be seen whether he could find satisfaction in the life of a student, after years passed in the midst of the great world, and surrounded by exciting circumstances. How far he had, however, turned these leisure hours to account, may be judged by the following memorandum, found, with many others of a similar kind, among his papers, and written most probably in Copenhagen about 1803.

"Works which I have to complete:

"1. Treatise on Roman Domains.

"2. Translation of El Wakidi

"3. History of Macedon.

"4. Account of the Roman Constitution at its various Epochs.

"5. History of the Achæan Confederation, of the Wars of the Confederates, and of the Civil Wars of Marius and Sylla.

"6. Constitutions of the Greek States.

"7. Empire of the Caliphs."

No detailed outlines of these, or any of his other literary undertakings, are to be found; but it must not be inferred that such memoranda contain mere projects, towards whose execution no steps were ever taken. That Niebuhr proposed any such work to himself, was a certain sign that he had read and thought deeply on the subject, but he was able to trust so implicitly to his extraordinary memory, that he never committed any portion of his essays to paper, till the whole was complete in his own mind. His memory was so wonderfully retentive, that he scarcely ever forgot any thing which he had once heard or read, and the facts he knew remained present to him at all times, even in their minutest details.

His wife and his sister once playfully took up Gibbon, and asked him questions from the table of contents, about the most trivial things, by way of testing his memory. They carried on the examination till they were tired, and gave up all hope of even detecting him in a momentary uncertainty, though he was at the same time engaged in writing on some other subject. He was once conversing with a party of Austrian officers about Napoleon's Italian campaigns. Some dispute arose respecting the position of different corps in the battle of Marengo.

Niebuhr described exactly how they were placed, and the progress of the action. The officers contradicted him; but on maps being brought he was found to be in the right, and to know more of the details of the conflict than the very officers who had been present. One day, when he was talking with Professor Welcker of Bonn, the conversation happened to turn on the weather, and Niebuhr quoted the results of barometrical observations in the different years, as far back as 1770, with perfect accuracy.

This power was not a merely mechanical faculty; it was intimately connected with the power of instantaneously seizing on all the relations of any fact placed before him, and with his wonderful imagination; his imagination, however, was that of an historian, not of a poet—it was not creative, but enabled him to form from the most various, and apparently inadequate sources, distinct and truthful pictures of scenes, actions, and characters. Hence his keen delight in travels; hence, too, his habit of pronouncing judgment on the men of other countries and of past times, with all the warmth of a fellow-countryman and a contemporary.

With his warm affections, and clear-sighted moral sense, it was impossible for him to form such opinions on past or present history, coolly standing aloof, as it were, and regarding the subject with calm superiority; he could not but condemn and despise all that was pernicious and base; he could not but love and reverence, with his whole heart, whatever was noble and beautiful. Such opinions and feelings he expressed with the utmost frankness, sometimes even with

vehemence, when prudence would have counselled more guarded language.

It was this same power of entering into the cast of thought and circumstances of others, which led foreigners to find pleasure in his society, and even to form intimate friendships with him, and which enabled him to predict with remarkable accuracy what course such and such statesmen would pursue in public affairs. But he was not, in general, fond of analysing character, especially the characters of those whom he loved. He could not endure to separate off their different qualities, and balance their excellences against their defects ;—he seized on the whole personality at once. In his friendships he was most warm and constant: though his constitutional irritability of mind and body sometimes betrayed him into expressions which gave pain for the moment, yet no one could be in truth more tender-hearted. He was fully aware of his own uncommon endowments, but his absolute freedom from envy, and his eagerness to recognise and do homage to merit of whatever kind, preserved him from such mean faults as vanity and conceit. He was himself habitually serious, but had a quick sense of the ludicrous, and greatly enjoyed wit and humour in others. Of children he was very fond, and was always a great favourite with them.

The university of Berlin was opened at Michaelmas, 1810. The most distinguished men in nearly all the departments of knowledge had been appointed, among whom Schleiermacher, Savigny, Buttmann and Heindorff are names well known to English readers. Indeed Berlin, from this time forward, may almost be con-

sidered as the centre of the intellectual life of Germany. Neibuhr was, therefore, in a favourable atmosphere for the prosecution of his learned researches, and, in fact, the next three years formed one of the calmest and happiest portions of his life. The political state of the world occupied him less than at almost any former period, partly because he was satisfied that no great improvement in the outward position of Prussia could take place for the present, while he retained the hope that, after a long preparatory night of discipline, a brighter day would yet dawn upon the future; partly because he now lived almost exclusively in the world of letters, and had comparatively little intercourse with political circles.

His first literary production, after his retirement from public life, was a Treatise on the Amphictyons, written in July, 1810.

At the opening of the university, Niebuhr delivered those lectures on Roman History which formed the foundation of his great historical work. He thus describes the mode in which the idea was first suggested to him, in a letter, dated the 31st of August, to Madame Hensler, who had just quitted Berlin after a visit at his house:—"We meant to be alone after you had left us, but Spalding dropped in accidentally. He told us that he meant to deliver lectures, in connexion with the university, this winter, and urged me to do the same. Nicolovius, to whom I mentioned the subject afterwards, was most warmly in favour of it. I would willingly take Spalding's suggestion as a call to the work; but he who announces a series of lectures without any

official call to do so, especially when he cannot conceal from himself that he should be disappointed if he had not some distinguished auditors, is bound to deliver something of more than ordinary excellence. Now the time for preparation is short, and I could never reconcile myself to patching my work up, and eking out the deficiencies with irrelevant matter. To give a course of lectures upon the whole of a science, or the history of a country, for the instruction of youths, is not a hard task; in most cases, one which simply requires a continued effort of memory; but it is quite another thing when one wishes, and ought to give only a quintessence, to the exclusion of all generally known points. I think I should succeed best at first with an account of the political and civil institutions of the nations of antiquity. You know how much study I have bestowed on these subjects already."

It is evident here that he had not yet decided upon the subject of his lectures, but on September 1st, he writes: "I have determined to give a course of lectures on the History of Rome. Spalding urged me to deliver, instead, a course for young men at first, and afterwards a single lecture upon some select theme. "I would never have undertaken to write the history of Rome, but to lecture on it is a somewhat less rash undertaking. I shall begin with the primitive state of Italy, and, as far as possible, represent the ancient races, not only from the narrow point of view of their subjugation, but also as they were in themselves, and as they had been in their earlier stages; then, in the Roman history, I shall give an account of the constitution and administration, of which I have a vivid picture before

my mind's eye. I should like to bring this history down to the latest era, when the forms developed from the germs of antiquity became utterly extinct, and those of the middle ages took their place." He writes to his father, in October, that he feels very happy in his new, or rather old, sphere of action, and desires its continuance; although there are moments in which he almost reproaches himself for his tranquillity, when he is conscious that he could fulfil certain public duties better than those who are now charged with them. This letter is also a proof that the most intense occupation with a subject like the Roman history, which called every feeling and power into action, could not stifle his interest in other perfectly dissimilar studies, belonging likewise rather to an earlier period of his life; for he relates to his father several facts connected with Bruce's Travels, which had recently come to light through the publication of the journals of the Italian who accompanied him.

Savigny says, of this opening course of lectures:* "Niebuhr himself describes the impression made by his course of lectures on Roman history, in a manner that cannot fail of its effect on the mind of any susceptible reader.† Certainly many might be disposed to think that in this letter he overrates the extent of his own success, as we are so apt to do in our own case, even when we are animated by the strongest love of truth; but I can testify that he has rather said too little than too much. Niebuhr was appearing for the first time in the character of an instructor; he had as yet earned no

* In his Essay on Niebuhr, appended to the Lebensnachrichten, vol. iii., p. 143.
† See letter, page 313.

fame as a writer, and thus the esteem and consideration which he certainly already enjoyed, were necessarily limited to the narrower circle of his personal acquaintance. He told me himself at the time, that he had only expected to have students, and a small number of them, as his hearers, and should have been fully satisfied if that had been the case; but in addition to a large audience of the students, they were attended by members of the Academy, professors of the University, public men and officers of all grades, who spread the fame of the lectures abroad, and thus continually attracted fresh hearers. It was the fairest harbinger of the future eminence of the youthful university. This unexpected success re-acted on Niebuhr's susceptible nature, and filled him with fresh inspiration. While he had previously felt a peculiar partiality for this subject of research, his courage and his inclination were now raised to the highest point by this respectful appreciation of his merits, and the daily and familiar intercourse with distinguished scholars.

"His time, at that period, was unceasingly occupied in productive efforts made with youthful energy and joy, and rewarded by a grateful recognition of their value; and it is visible even in these letters, as well as confirmed by many expressions to his friends, that no portion of his life afforded him such high and unmixed enjoyment.

"The mode of his delivery was also remarkable. He had written down his lecture verbatim, and read it off before his hearers. This proceeding, which usually injures the liveliness of the impression, had in his case, the most animated and powerful effect, such as in

general only accompanies an extempore delivery. His hearers felt as if transported into ancient times, when the public reading of new works supplied the place of our printed books, and there was a less extended circulation, but they made a warmer and more personal impression."

The writer of the foregoing extract was one of those to whose intimacy Niebuhr considered himself most deeply indebted for the acquisition of new ideas, and for that sympathy with his own, which was the best stimulus to his creative powers. Von Savigny had already attained a high reputation as a professor of jurisprudence, at Marburg and Landshut, when he was called to Berlin at the opening of the university; but he had not yet published his "History of Roman Law in the Middle Ages," and "System of Roman Law at the Present Day," through which he has since acquired celebrity. Niebuhr has acknowledged his obligations to Savigny, in the preface to his first volume of the "History of Rome." Another of the learned friends to whom he alludes was Nicolovius, who was now employed in Berlin under the minister for ecclesiastical affairs and public instruction.

Schleiermacher, Buttman, Heindorf, Spalding, and two others, with Niebuhr, instituted a sort of little philological society, the members of which used to meet once a week at each other's houses in turn, to read and correct some classical author. The evenings concluded with a supper, at which the utmost freedom and hilarity prevailed. Buttman especially was as much distinguished by his sparkling wit as by his learning. Niebuhr's was

one of those child-like open natures that cannot exist without the unrestrained communication of their thoughts. Probably this impulse to express his ideas, just as they arose, was one of the chief causes which so long withheld him from coming forward as a writer. He threw out all his best thoughts in conversation, and lost, by so doing, the incentive to any further communication of them; meanwhile, he retained them with unfading colours in his own mind, by means of his unexampled memory, without needing to write them down, and with this he was satisfied. To this must also be added, that he set before himself an unattainable ideal, which, on objective rather than subjective grounds, he thought it a duty to realise before submitting any production to the world.

Now, however, the success which attended his lectures in the delivery, induced him to extend his researches, and to combine their results so as to render them fit for publication. From this time forward he regarded the writing of his "History of Rome" as the vocation and task of his life.

He was closely occupied during this winter with his lectures, and their preparation for printing, which began as early as May. But he found time to write, besides, a "Treatise on the History of the Scythians and Sarmatians," for the Academy of Science, and at the request of the minister Dohna, drew up a plan for the re-organisation of the provincial governments.

By the middle of June, 1811, the printing of the first volume of his history was so far advanced, that he was able to take a long-projected journey to Holstein. The

fatigue occasioned by his constant labour in the composition of his History, had begun seriously to affect his health, and rendered a change necessary. He remained among his relations in Holstein till the middle of September. These family meetings were among the most delightful recollections of all who took part in them. After spending the morning in work, Niebuhr devoted the rest of the day to relaxation, entering eagerly into the games of the children, or reading aloud to their parents, on which occasions he used generally to take the comic parts, to the great amusement of his hearers.

On his return to Berlin, he found the first volume of his History ready for publication. In the winter of 1811-12, he continued his lectures, and at the same time prepared the second volume of his History for the press. He attended, this winter, Schleiermacher's lectures on the history of philosophy, and declares in one of his letters that, "he does not think any other university can boast of anything like them." In December he wrote a treatise for the Academy, on which, however, he himself did not set any great value. The second volume of the "History of Rome," which he composed during this winter, contains the remainder of the lectures that he delivered in the preceding one. According to the plan he had made at this time, the lectures of 1811-12 were to form the third, and a part of the fourth volume. He then expected to be able to bring the History down to the time of Augustus, with the fifth volume—which he afterwards found impossible, as his researches extended—and hoped to complete the work

in a few years, if he continued to labour at it without interruption.

In February, 1812, he was seriously ill with an inflammation of the chest, and was obliged to discontinue his lectures for some time.

In the spring of this year, the French armies began their march through Prussia, on their way to Moscow. The interest in politics, which had only slumbered for a time in Niebuhr's mind, could not but be roused again by the aspect of affairs, and directed with eager attention to the results of the events that were taking place. On occasion of the passage of one of the bodies of troops, he met with Intendant-general Dumas, whom he had formerly known in Holstein, when he took refuge there after the French Directory had condemned him to be transported to Cayenne. He regarded Dumas as an honourable and intelligent man, whom he should have heartily rejoiced in meeting under different circumstances.

Though the constant arrival and departure of troops occasioned him much disturbance, as soldiers were quartered in his house, he got his second volume ready for the press by May. He wrote several reviews during the summer of 1812, but, with this exception, allowed himself, at length, a little intermission from his labours. These reviews he did not wish to survive him, and he had a similar feeling with regard to all his polemic writings. His opinion was that, though it is necessary to be able to contend for the truth, no unfriendly words ought to be preserved. With regard to his political writings he said, that they might be collected after his death if it seemed advisable.

Meanwhile, the second volume of his Roman History was sent to press. The indifference with which, as he thought, it was received by the public, pained him much; but he persisted in his resolution of continuing the work. The circumstances of that time, when the public attention was universally engrossed by the great transactions taking place in the north of Europe, were necessarily unfavourable to the reception of a work like his.

In October, 1812, he began a course of lectures on Roman antiquities, and went on with them to the end, notwithstanding the excitement occasioned by the frequent passage of troops. He was likewise occupied with the revisal of the third volume of the History, which he intended to have ready for the printer by the beginning of the new year. This plan was frustrated by the important events that ensued, which engaged all his thoughts, and filled his soul with new hopes of deliverance from the French yoke. He was soon involved in the bustle and turmoil of public life.

Niebuhr had hitherto read his lectures gratis; he now took fees for them, which he devoted to the assistance of distressed families, who were naturally at this time more numerous than usual. To have it in his power to afford help wherever he saw anxiety or want, was always a joy to him. He and his wife exercised their benevolence most nobly, both in great things and small, and he often expressed his thankfulness to God for having given him the means to be of service.

During the winter of 1812-13, French troops were

constantly passing through Berlin on their way from Russia. Their disasters kindled a ray of hope in every heart; and though the unutterable sufferings of the enemy excited general compassion, the spirit of patriotism rejoiced in the prospect of brighter days. On the evacuation of Berlin by the French, in February, 1813, Niebuhr shared in the national rejoicings, and not less in the enthusiasm displayed in the preparations for the complete re-conquest of freedom. When the Landwehr was called out, he refused to evade serving in it, as he could take no other part in the war. His wish was to act as secretary to the general staff; but if this were not possible, he meant to enter the service as a volunteer with some of his friends. For this purpose, he went through the exercises, and when the time came for those of his age to be summoned, sent in his name as a volunteer to the Landwehr. He would have preferred entering a regular regiment, and applied to the King for permission to do so; but this request was refused by him, and he added that he would give him other commissions more suited to his talents.

Niebuhr's friends in Holstein could hardly trust their eyes, when he wrote them word that he was drilling for the army, and that his wife entered with equal enthusiasm into his feelings. The greatness of the object had so inspired Madame Niebuhr, who was usually anxious, even to a morbid extent, at the slightest imaginable peril for the husband in whom she might truly be said to live, that she was willing and ready to bring even her most precious treasure as a sacrifice to her country.

In the mean time, however, that he might at least do something, if only indirectly, for the good cause, Niebuhr established a journal, under the sanction of the Prussian government, entitled the "Prussian Correspondent," the name of which expresses its object. He edited it himself, until he was, after a short time, called to head-quarters. He resumed the editorship several times afterwards, but never for long together, because he was so frequently summoned in other directions. During the intervals, when the journal was conducted by other hands, some very bitter articles appeared against Denmark, which excited his strong displeasure, but for which he has nevertheless been much blamed in that country, where it was supposed that he was responsible for their insertion.

Extracts from Niebuhr's Letters from the Summer of 1810 *to the Spring of* 1813.

CXXIX.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, *1st October*, 1810.

Zelter says that Goethe is at work on his biography, and means afterwards to continue Wilhelm Meister. Zelter has been studying his Questions upon Music, and declares that he, not being at all musical, not even having learnt music, will yet bring forward a doctrine of acoustics, which is profound, quite novel, and in his opinion convincing. Here, also, he discovers the law of diverging tendencies. Is not this an extraordinary triumph of genius? Goethe has seen the King of Holland, and they are mutually pleased with each other.

I have offered my services to the minister Dohna, with whom I am, as you know, on a footing of friendship, to

organise the affairs of the provinces, but my name is not to be mentioned. I have already finished a considerable part of this work, and given it in. If it should be carried into actual operation, I should hope to feel myself of sufficient use, for my conscience to be easy about the receipt of my salary.

I have been unwell for some time with low fever, but it is going off.

CXXX.

BERLIN, 13*th October*, 1810.

We are gradually making our arrangements for a more settled mode of life. My Milly has arranged all my books upon the shelves with much care and industry, which is worth a great deal to me. I buy a good many books at auctions now, so that my library enlarges every week. . . . .

Within the last few weeks we have seen Savigny several times. He seems inclined to be very friendly with me, and I fancy we shall get intimate when we have known each other longer. His wife is very lively and pleasing.

I have bought at an auction a bundle of pamphlets written in the sixteenth, and beginning of the seventeenth century. If, in a collection formed so fortuitously, we find many things that are excellent, and none that are positively bad, we cannot but conceive a respect for the age that produced them. This collection contains a string of apophthegms, under the title of "New and True Gazette for the year 1620." Our literature has not, since its revival, recovered the truthful and earnest spirit which they breathe, although it has taken a higher flight. What does this profit us? It is now the delight of a few; formerly it was an expression of the national character; and we may justly call the period from Luther to the Thirty Years' War, the golden age of Protestant Germany.

I agree with you, that it is better not to read books in which you make the acquaintance of the devil. I have been reading criminal trials lately, and have seen how judges and

accusers have come to look on the most hardened and crafty criminals as objects of interest. But no danger of this kind can arise from reading a poetical work. In general the danger springs from the way in which vices are made to border on virtues, and the two are mingled together in characters, so that you rarely find any one so abandoned as to have no good sides to his character when you look closely into it, and hence you are apt to show him undue indulgence.

Amelia's eyes are again very weak; and you will therefore receive only a short postscript from her, for she can only write by daylight, and it is already some time since dinner. Her cough is rather more tolerable, but not gone.

CXXXI.

BERLIN, *9th November*, 1810.

Milly has already answered your questions about my lectures, while I was at our philological society yesterday, so that I can only glean after her. . . . . She has told you that the number of my hearers was much greater than I had anticipated. But their character, no less than their number, is such as encourages and animates me to pursue my labours with zeal and perseverance. You will feel this when I tell you that Savigny, Schleiermacher, Spalding, Ancillon, Nicolovius, Schmedding, and Süvern were present. In reply to your other question, I must tell you that I am more satisfied with them myself than with any of my former productions; (I have quite remodelled the introduction.) This is, no doubt, partly owing to the universal approbation they call forth, which is a great stimulus and high enjoyment to me. For besides the number and selectness of my audience, the general interest evinced in the lectures exceeds my utmost hopes. My introductory lecture produced as strong an impression as an oration could have done; and all the dry erudition which followed it, in the history of the old Italian tribes, which serves as an introduction to that of Rome, has not driven away even my unlearned hearers. The attention with which Savigny honours me, and his declaration that I

am opening a new era for Roman history, naturally stimulate my ardent desire to carry out to the full extent the researches which one is apt to leave half finished, as soon as one clearly perceives the result to which they tend, in order to turn to something fresh. That it is impossible, with two hours a week, to present the history of Rome in due proportions in the course of a single winter, I am quite aware; and yet I would on no account compress what I have to say; for it is precisely this vivid, life-like representation of a multitude of well-defined objects, which constitutes the excellence of any historical work, that aims to rise above mediocrity. As far as I can, I compose the whole in manuscript in such a way that it may serve as the basis of a work, suited for publication. For I must begin to think of publishing now, because it is while I am delivering my lectures that my best discoveries in ancient history come to light, which, if not published, might probably be forgotten, and lost to the world. In addition to my previous discoveries, which are now all gaining in clearness and certainty, I have already made several new ones, some of which are very important, in the progress of my labours.

Our little philological association will not degenerate. We are reading and emendating Herodotus. I explain the historical, others the grammatical part, and thus we really form a miniature academy.

CXXXII.

BERLIN, *24th November*, 1810.

I advance but slowly with my lectures, and shall have to stop far from the goal; but I discover much that, to me at least, appears interesting; for instance, the cyclical system of the old Italian mode of reckoning the years is new. The Mexican mode of chronology gave me a light upon this point. I have collected a great number of data tending to confirm my long-cherished view, that the West of Europe possessed a primitive and quite peculiar cultivation—a system of science strictly speaking,—before it had received any

influences from the East. I would rather write to you about things of this kind, than of what we see, and hear, and witness.

I have received a commission which some might think important, but to me appears of very little consequence—to draw up a Constitution for the Academy of Science, in conjunction with Ancillon and some others. I like Savigny very much, and he seems to have a great regard for me too. Our respective studies lead us over the same ground, so that we have much to talk over and exchange with each other. I felt diffident when I first heard that he was among my hearers, but his extraordinary interest in my lectures is the most favourable sentence that could be pronounced on them, as he is certainly better acquainted with their subject than any other of our contemporaries.

7th December.—Since writing the above I have been at work on the Constitution of the Academy, with the view of completely remodelling it. I have also read a paper in the Academy lately. You see that I am fulfilling my engagement to you, and writing more than I read. May all go well with you, and Gretchen speedily recover! . . . .

CXXXIII.

BERLIN, 19*th March*, 1810.

. . . . With a little more quiet my position would be one more completely in accordance with my wishes than I have long ventured even to hope for. There is such a real mutual attachment between my acquaintances and myself, and our respective studies give such an inexhaustible interest to conversation, that I now really possess in this respect what I used to feel the want of; for intercourse of this kind is quickening and instructive. The lectures themselves, too, are inspiriting, because they require persevering researches, which I venture to say cannot remain unfruitful to me, and they are more exciting than mere literary labours, because I deliver them with the warmth inspired by fresh thoughts and discoveries, and afterwards converse with those

who have heard them, and to whom they are as new as to myself. This makes the lectures a positive delight to me, and I feel already quite averse to bring them to a close. What I should like would be to have whole days of perfect solitude, and then an interval of intercourse with the persons I really like, but not to remain for so many hours together with them as is customary here. This is the very land of calls and parties. Even our Friday meeting I would sometimes rather be without, though it has always hitherto done me good. It would scarcely be possible to have less frivolity or dulness in a mixed society. Schleiermacher is the most intellectual man among them. The complete absence of jealousy among these scholars is particularly gratifying.

My historical researches seem to me to gain in importance every week, and I hope to solve enigmas in the history and constitution of Rome, which my predecessors have either laboured at in vain, or passed over in silence. Much is wanting, indeed, to the formation of a history, and I shall not give my work to the world as such. . . . .

CXXXIV.

BERLIN, *in March*, 1811.

. . . . Milly has already written to you about your scepticism with regard to the existence of in-born, incorruptible integrity, unswayed by motives of self-interest. I should be shocked at it, were I not already aware of your holding other similar opinions which belong to the same theory as this. Yet you *can* have no doubts with regard to your own motives; and without asking whether I too may not defy any suspicion of the kind through the whole course of my life—whether self-interest of any sort has ever had charms for me—I will point you to other examples. You yourself are convinced that there is an innate difference in talents, at least in man as he exists in the actual world. Now even granting that this arises solely from organisation, and that this organisation is from the beginning some-

thing external and foreign to the individual, and that its consequences do not affect the spiritual unity of man's nature; still among actual living men one individual is essentially different from another. In one, certain tendencies predominate from the first, in another, opposite ones. This cannot be denied by any one. In one man, we see disinterestedness from his earliest childhood; in another, covetousness. In most cases these tendencies may be controlled or suppressed; a large majority of men may become utterly corrupt; but the man who has an innate love of justice, who would scorn to oppress or injure another, will resist the external influences of his condition in life, especially where he might reap a base advantage for himself. It must indeed be admitted, that ambitious pretensions may dazzle and take a firm hold of minds, noble in themselves, but narrow in their views, and we will forgive them for it morally, as labouring under a mischievous delusion. But no moderately honest man can say, "others shall become poor that I may remain rich;" and whoever says this, to himself or aloud, is not one whit better than a thief.

Who could have the heart to sit as a judge in criminal cases, if he listened to the voice of such sophistry: "Behold! the criminal whom thou art about to condemn—to render wretched for his whole life, if not to deprive of that life,—is at bottom no worse than thou. Had he been born and brought up in thy condition, he would sit on thy seat of judgment; and thou, in his place, wouldst have stood before the tribunal to answer for thy crimes!" "No," answers the just man, "I will not deny my sins, nor that I might be rightfully judged by my superior—I might have committed greater faults than have actually occurred—but that I could never have become base I know, as I know my own existence, for it is a part of my existence, which is no mere transcendental, colourless 'I am.'" No one can be further than I am from the proud belief in an absolute freedom of will belonging to all human beings; for the will can be exercised only by means of, and with thought; and can we think as we will—or do we think as it is given to us? Thus, too, I believe

only in a limited force of will, to every one according to his kind, and his original peculiar impulses. These impulses may be in some individuals so bad, so decidedly wicked, that in their wickedness, in the lawfulness of exterminating so deformed a creature, lie the right and the duty to inflict the penalty of death in cases which legislators no longer punish with severity. In others, everything is so undecided and weak, that they can never attain to more than *habits*, with regard to all that is not purely animal; and these habits, even when good, testify to no intrinsic virtue. You may be perfectly right as far as such persons are concerned, in saying that their disinterestedness—a quality, however, very rare in people of this kind—occupies a place in which other circumstances might have planted covetousness and shameless arrogance. But no one can have less right to extend this verdict to the generality of men than you, whose strong and beautiful soul certainly possessed within itself the capacity for becoming what it is, however we may allow that external circumstances may have helped to enrich it. But circumstances were favourable to you, only as they are to the pine, which possesses within itself the strength to entwine its roots among the rocks, and to spring into the air from the mountain peak.

You have often wounded me, and done me injustice by the assertion that my strictness of judgment is dictated by party feeling. Yet in spite of this condemnation you will hardly accuse me seriously of unwarrantable palliation of faults, which, however, is always pre-supposed in party opinions; the one never exists without the other. The degree of danger, of injury, of conscious responsibility, may render our judgment of an action milder or severer; the hearer must weigh this, and calculate its worth. It is impossible to feel an equal amount of indignation towards a band of poisoners, or of incendiaries in Turkey, and one in the city where we live; for in the latter case, the impression which gives rise to our feeling multiplies itself, and a human weakness mixes with it some dim apprehension of personal danger. But I should be a childish novice, unworthy to

believe myself capable of writing history,—which means in fact to depict and pass sentence on the past as if it were the present—or of conducting business, if a thing appeared to me good or bad, according as it came from the east or the west. The financial legislation of Austria, for instance, is evidently dictated, like all her measures, by honourable intentions, and is not intended to favour the nobility, or any other class,—any unfairness which may have crept in, is so slight as not to be worth mentioning,—yet it is so perverted and ruinous that it has made me almost as angry as the projects of the Notables among us, only with this difference, that anger is much sooner appeased in this case than where selfishness is the root of the evil.

And now something else, as I have still room. Have you ever heard of Goethe's inaugural disputation, and of a theological essay, which he wrote in his youth? I first heard of them lately, and have had the latter in my possession (since Boje's auction) without knowing that it is his. In this he proves, not in jest, but to the full conviction of all truth-loving readers, that it was not the Ten Commandments, but the ten fundamental laws of the distinctive peculiarities of the Israelites, which were inscribed on the tables of the law. This was also the subject of his inaugural disputation, which he wished to publish at Strasburg, where he took his degree. The heads of the University, however, considered it as profane, and denied their permission. The second half of the essay, in which he explains the phrase "to speak with tongues," is very remarkable, because it is quite mystical, and belongs to that strange period of his life in which he was a mystic. . . . .

CXXXV.

BERLIN, 18*th May*, 1811.

. . . . You have no doubt seen Öhlenschläger: what impression has he made upon you? The Danes undoubtedly possess poetical talents, if they were not so deficient in clearness and penetration of mental vision, without which the imagination can never create pure and great

conceptions, free from mannerisms, as well as from oriental phantasms.

I am now approaching the conclusion of my lectures, and the printing is about to commence. I begin it with a thorough consciousness of what is in my book, and of the rank it will hold at some future day; but I am not quite easy as to its immediate reception, partly because I am aware that the execution might and ought to be improved in many respects, partly because no one is allowed to bring forward novelties before our public with impunity, however clearly their correctness may be proved. Then I have already enjoyed, for the most part, the reception given to it by affection, from Savigny and other friends: that of disapprobation is still to come. I have written with such strict conscientiousness—not merely with regard to the praise and blame I have dispensed, but also with respect to the historical researches—that I could die on this book. It certainly will furnish little reading for recreation, and I confess to myself that by the side of many passages successful in point of style, there are others very awkward and stiff. The great merit of the book lies in the criticism of history, and in the light thrown on many insulated points of the constitution, laws, &c. You will understand that I talk to you about my work, because at present I am living wholly in it. You will hear all the less of it when I come to see you. To-day the publisher has sent me Frederick Schlegel's lectures; I have dipped into them here and there, and received a pleasant impression. He incontestably possesses genuine talent, and he has freed himself from that unhappy taste which he formerly did so much to promote.

CXXXVI.

HAMBURGH, 11*th September*, 1811.

. . . . The president of the court of justice, De Serre,* is spoken of in the highest terms. He is so completely master

* This Count de Serre became, many years after in Rome, one of Niebuhr's dearest friends. His family had emigrated from France in 1791, when he was

of the German language that he opened the first sitting with an address in German, which gives the consolatory pledge that all proceedings at law will be carried on in the language of the country. In a party of Germans, a short time since, he defended Klopstock from the attacks of his fellow-townsmen, adding, indignantly, that no one should dare to speak of him who had not a pure heart himself. It appears as if the French courts of justice had, in general, retained all the respectability of the old parliaments.

I have no inclination to write to you of political facts and rumours. Let us know every particular about yourself and your employments. Yesterday the Behrenses also will have left you. I fancy you will have found your house oppressive, and sought the open air. Do not chase away the image of your absent friends, when it rises up with longing before you; do not despise its companionship. But perhaps I do you injustice; and you know how to retain as well as endure the feeling of separation. Give our love to Gretchen, and all our friends. We shall not be able to write to you from Berlin for a week to come. . . . .

CXXXVII.

BERLIN, *5th October*, 1811.

Milly has told you of the anxiety caused us by the detention of your letter; we have received it to-day by the Russian post. If we were able to write freely, I should have much to tell you worth relating, though it does not immediately concern ourselves. However, it is impossible to be quite silent respecting things on which our fate and external repose depend, even if this letter should be opened. During our absence the public alarm and excitement have been great, but there has been no talk of the departure of the court, or of packing up at the palace, as you were told. Preparations

sixteen years of age, and settled in Germany. He thus became early acquainted with German literature, and he seems to have had by nature a cast of mind more German than French. He supported himself for some years by keeping a school, till Napoleon made him president of the Court of Appeal in Hamburgh, after that city had been incorporated with France.

for war have been made, and, as this has been done in imitation of the French, it has excited attention on both sides. As I told you in my last, we found the public mind unexpectedly calmed down, and the report was current that the Emperor had written an autograph letter containing an assurance of his friendly intentions. Now this letter has, in all probability, merely existed in the heads of some who thought themselves bound to keep the public free from uneasiness, even by deceit; this much only is certain, that the Count St. Marsan had an audience of the King, and that in consequence the preparations which were in progress have been suspended. The main question, the maintenance of peace between France and Russia, is still as undecided as before. Some affirm that Austria is engaged in active negotiations, and that the winter will pass over without war. Others draw an entirely opposite inference from circumstances that are known, and from an unprejudiced consideration of circumstances, which we can scarcely expect to be overlooked by him on whose will the decision depends.

If, however, I do not reckon as confidently as many on a quiet winter, I am not much disturbed about the matter, and freely give myself up to the enjoyment of the quiet that has hitherto been unexpectedly prolonged.

My lectures will recommence at the end of the month, and I must be preparing for them. The journey has certainly put me out a little, but I shall soon get into train again; the being too long engaged with one subject is a more dangerous enemy; both because one's interest may relax, and because one contracts an habitual mode of looking at things, whereby the work loses a part of its distinctness,—the worker his susceptibility to new impressions. I shall have to guard against both dangers, particularly at first, for their publication has certainly to me stripped the charm of novelty from the subjects of my history. I shall not hurry the composition of the second volume, that my mind may remain fresh.

This morning we have been to see the Museum of Natural History, which is being formed here under Illiger's direction, and is really a very splendid one. I do not know whether it

is my own fault that such collections suggest no pious thoughts to me? The infinite variety of nature is brought too close to one; and in its contemplation the individual vanishes entirely from view; only the species remains, and one asks oneself, why should it be otherwise with man? Besides, the melancholy-looking, as well as the ugly animals, give me a very painful impression. Yet I could willingly linger there, and can only console myself for my ignorance, as compared to the learning of naturalists, by reflecting that, after all, they confine themselves so exclusively to the external side of things, that their knowledge would only give one hints for investigation, and but little insight.

I have begun to attend our philological party again. There are two of its members wanting, whom we all miss very much, Spalding and Heindorf.

CXXXVIII.

BERLIN, 1*st November*, 1811.

So Goethe's life has come out, and I shall have it in a few days. It always gives me a melancholy feeling when a great man writes his life. It is already evening with him then, and that he relates how he lived, shows that he no longer lives quite from the root. Else he could never do it. Jacobi's book is not yet out; as far as I know, can indeed hardly be looked for yet. I do not know whether I can rejoice in its appearance. When he was in his prime he felt, very rightly, that the spirit of his philosophy required to be presented in a visible shape, in the picture of a life, just as the philosophy itself does not separate the formal from the real; in an abstract, systematic shape, it will not be like itself.

I enjoy my lectures for their own sake. I should like to deliver several more courses. My audience is much less numerous than it was last winter; there are only about sixty, and among them several officers. I do not know whether I may reckon this as a confirmation of the favourable opinion I have often expressed of this class. There are many elements of good among us striving for life,—of a better

spirit than existed in happier times. There are heavings under the heavy burden, and though we may have evil days still before us, yet a better time must follow than that which succeeded to the misery of the Thirty Years' War. Nonsense of all kinds has been so brought to the test, and become so powerless, that, at last, sense must necessarily take its place, be it under what form it may. . . . .

Have you heard that Madame de Staël has received an intimation not to hold intercourse with Schlegel? A violent resentment against him reigns at the French court, because it is supposed that it was he who inspired her to praise the German literature. Her praise has done us a bad service in France; for to it is owing the animosity against German literature, which lies at the bottom of the regulations concerning the publishing trade in the new Departments.* The German literature is considered as hostile to the French, as an intellectual power which proudly refuses to the latter the homage due to that of the victorious nation. The French translation of the "Lectures on the Drama" is prohibited, and some consider this as a just punishment of Schlegel for having said he would not indeed use the French language for poetry; but for prose, he would use that which was the most widely read. . . .

CXXXIX.

BERLIN, *16th November*, 1811.

When it came into my head to say to you that autobiography in general was the song of the swan,—and Goethe's no exception,—I certainly made too sweeping an assertion. With him, at least, youth has been renewed by the contemplation of his youth, and if he should write nothing like it again, he has written nothing like it for a long time past. The picture of his life is inimitably sweet and graceful. I feel sure that we cannot differ in our judgment of this book.

* Publishers in the parts of Germany that were incorporated with France were obliged to submit all books to a censorship before bringing them out, and works containing any passages which could be construed into expressions of hostility to France, or French interests, were liable to be prohibited.

The number of trifles it relates will not annoy you,—you will fancy him narrating, and it is the peculiar charm of the style that you can really feel as if he were telling you the whole. The story of his first love is exquisitely beautiful; no second equal to it can occur in the history, and I should not be sorry if the book were to remain unfinished.

Our life flows on in its uniform course without change. On Friday, I attend my society; four days a week I hear Schleiermacher; two days I lecture myself; we seldom go into company, and visits at our own house take up much less time than they did last winter. I might do a great deal in consequence, but I cannot boast. . . . .

. . . . One evening in the week, the Savignys and ourselves generally spend together; and we often spend an evening with one or other of our friends besides—at Prince Radziwill's, for instance.

CXL.

BERLIN, 29*th November*, 1811.

. . . . I have been for some time past disturbed by something in Schleiermacher's lectures, which could not come out so plainly in the first part, and certainly enables me to comprehend the unfavourable impression entertained of him by some noble-minded men, which used to give me pain, as I thought it wholly unfounded. Schleiermacher does not content himself with bare notices of the various philosophical teachers; he brings them into connexion, and endeavours to trace out the fundamental idea of each of the ancient philosophers. This is as it ought to be; but it is a very difficult and critical matter to pursue such investigations, and requires that you should divest yourself of your own views; the necessity of which he himself inculcated in his introduction most impressively, but which he does not put in practice. It is my firm belief that he acts with perfect honesty in the matter, and that those who dispute his strict integrity in such, or any other cases, do him wrong; nevertheless, he appears to me to be in error. Though he does not indeed always attribute to the ancient philosophers that

pantheistic view, which regards matter merely as a phenomenon, and yet calls a Cause of the world external to matter an absurdity, he constantly refers to this view as to the primitive one, from which the various systems gradually departed, although it was only presented originally in poetical works. He also speaks of Anaxagoras, who first taught that Reason was an independent order of the universe, with a distaste, almost amounting to animosity, which has made a very painful impression on me, little as I am inclined to implicit faith. According to him, too, the early Ionian philosophers, the most elevated of all those who clothed their faith in the form of the popular religion, did not act sincerely in so doing. With these drawbacks, I like his lectures *much*,—they revive many recollections of the wisdom of the ancients, and contain much which I have never yet read. If we still possessed Herodotus and the earliest philosophers, we should recognise at what an infinite height they stood above Plato and the later philosophers. Schleiermacher probably feels this too, with much more capability of exploring the recesses of the subject than I possess, and yet, on the other hand, there is something in him which repels him from them, and that is what I would rather not have perceived.

When you receive your own copy of my History, give the one you have now to Gretchen.

It may be interesting to see Goethe's opinion of Niebuhr's History of Rome, as expressed in the following letter to him, on receiving a copy of the first part of the work.

FROM GOETHE TO NIEBUHR.

If I have often sinned against my friends and well-wishers by the delay of my answers, I will rather, for this once, be somewhat premature, and thank you, even before I have received your work, for the pleasure you have given me by your letter. You bear a name which I have learnt to

honour from my youth up, and of yourself, I have heard from many friends, so much that is amiable, excellent, and distinguished, that I feel as though I already knew you well, and can sincerely assure you that I have a great desire to make your personal acquaintance.

In the mean time, the work which you announce to me will afford me an agreeable and instructive occupation; for what can be more attractive than to find a subject, which has been so often and so variously discussed, placed in a new light, and, as it were, born into a fresh life, by means of new researches? However rarely it has been permitted to me, in the course of my life, to occupy myself with topics which interest me so deeply, I know well how to value those who have the talent and perseverance to undertake such enterprises.

I hope you will accept kindly these hasty thanks, and continue to think of me with friendship. GOETHE.

JENA, *November 27th*, 1811.

I brought this letter with me from Jena to Weimar, where I found your excellent work awaiting me, and immediately began to read it. Now I have finished it, and should like, before I begin it over again, (which is most necessary in order to understand and profit by it,) to express my thanks, not merely in general terms as a first impression, but in detail as they have been called forth by the various points in your work. Very probably, however, a considerable time might elapse ere I should be able to do this, and with the best will in the world, I might be forced to detain this sheet still longer. Permit me, therefore, to say no more than that I have felt myself transported to the time of my own visit to Rome, when all around me impressed me perpetually with the want of such researches, while at every step I became too clearly aware how little capable I, no less than others, was of conducting them. Since then, a long time has passed, during which I have continued to turn my attention to these subjects; and your book, which solves so many enigmas at once, is most welcome.

We can now picture to ourselves the condition of Italy before the Roman period, and form a clear idea of the order in which, so to speak, the various strata of population were deposited one above another. Your discrimination of the poetical from the historical element is of inestimable worth, since by it neither is destroyed, but rather for the first time fully confirmed in its true value and dignity; and there is an inexhaustible interest in seeing how the two again coalesce, and exert a mutual influence. It is much to be wished that all similar phenomena in the history of the world may be treated in the same method. Does it need many words to assure you that I have derived the utmost instruction, from your development of the position of the State and of its finances, of its relations to Greece, of the anarchical condition of Rome after the expulsion of the kings—in short, from all and every part. Were I to go into detail, and to speak of your description of Ancus Martius, of your unveiling of the Sybilline books, or to dwell upon the poems of Lucretia and Coriolanus, I should have to write a book upon the book, and these sheets would never reach the post. Rest assured that you have sent me a noble gift, for which I shall all my life feel grateful to you; that I am looking forward to the continuation with the greatest eagerness, and, in order to render myself worthy of it, am making your first volume thoroughly my own by the most diligent study.

May I ask you to give some attention to the enclosed papers, and especially to procure for me the autograph of your honoured father. Recommending myself once more to your kind remembrance and friendly sympathy,

GOETHE.

WEIMAR, 17*th December*, 1811.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

CXLI.

BERLIN, 14*th January*, 1812.

. . . . I do not take M.'s verdict in bad part. The two great Greek historians are essentially episodical, and if I

wrote infinitely better than I do, I should, no doubt, place and connect the episodes with more art, but there would certainly be rather more than fewer of them. For do we see a country by merely travelling through it on the most direct post roads, or by deviating frequently from the route, while keeping to one main direction? . . . .

CXLII.

BERLIN, 28*th January*, 1812.

The censure passed by some upon the inequality of my style was not unexpected. I cannot trust myself to decide whether it is deserved or not. You are well aware that the style, such as it is, is the unsought-for expression of my thoughts at the moment, and never affected. That inequality is not a fault in itself, and that the simplicity of a chronicle may stand side by side with poetry in the same historical work, I am ready to maintain against any one; for there is much that is only rendered bearable by the greatest simplicity of expression, but with that becomes even good; and then, again, there are parts where the clearness of your inward vision raises your style to what is called poetical. In this sense, Thucydides is unequal, so unequal that, even in ancient times, critics have doubted whether the eighth book was his composition; and how unequal is Demosthenes in one and the same oration! Must not the style naturally follow the change of subject? Cicero is very uniform; I think not altogether to his praise. For uniformity is the colour which the writer lays on; though I allow that a great author *may* have such a perfect command over his subject as to bring even the most difficult parts into one ground tone without injury, as Tacitus has done in his *latest* work, the "Annals:" with the modern writers, however, who have attempted this, objective truth is utterly lost. Should I some day, when the first volumes are quite completed, be able to prepare a new edition, I will conscientiously examine whether I have caught the right tone for each passage; I may have failed in this respect, but I cannot judge of it at

present. However, the judgment of the reader on this point does not trouble me much; few, if I may venture to say so, are familiar with the true antique style, and can enter into its spirit when presented to them under a new form; and as such, in fact, I regard the varying tone of my discourse. Does not Shakspeare give us the most common-place language in one scene, and, in the next, the highest poetry? Is it possible, for instance, to relate the Bavarian War of Succession, and the struggle of Thermopylæ, with the same cast of expression?

I am not quite satisfied with the few first sheets of the second volume, which are now printed; they are wanting in life and movement. It is a bad thing to be obliged to force oneself to work of this kind; industry we can command, but the state of mind comes from God and from without. Meanwhile, the contents are not bad. I am continually finding confirmations and developments of my fundamental views. In my lectures I have just been relating the story of Pyrrhus with real pleasure; he has always been my favourite hero. . . . . *

CXLIII.

BERLIN, *6th March*, 1812.

I thank you for the sympathy expressed by your anxiety about my health, but there is no cause for uneasiness. It is not likely that I shall be really and permanently well before the spring. There is some one ill in every house; nearly all my acquaintances are more or less unwell, low-spirited, and good for nothing. I fear that the traces of my present state will be only too visible in my book. . . . .

So Müller's Letters have made as agreeable an impression upon you as they did upon Savigny; but with him this impression has not proved lasting.

I have not seen them yet, because I do not choose to buy them. They will be as remarkable as those to Bonstetten, but I cannot blind myself to the fact that, from his earliest

* In the latter part of this letter, and in the next, dated 22nd February, he gives an account of a serious illness he had about this time.

youth, Müller's* feelings and opinions were made up. The pure vital breath and freshness of truth are wanting in all his writings. He had an extraordinary talent for assuming a character, and maintaining it with consistency, till he changed it again for another; but, after reading his writings on the Bellum Cimbricum, it would have been clear to me, from now to the day of judgment, that he had no native solidity of character, even had I never seen him. There was no harmony in him, and the sources of his power gradually dried up as he advanced in age. His talents marked him out for a literary man in the narrowest sense of the term; historical criticism was utterly foreign to him; his imagination had no wide range, and the unexampled multitude of facts which he accumulated, remained in reality a lifeless and unorganised mass in his head. Forgive me for this verdict: you will not suspect that I, who am only just coming forward as an historical author, would willingly say anything in disparagement of the man who enjoys the highest celebrity among us in this department; though he is hardly read at all, and the worthlessness of his "Universal History" is acknowledged even by his admirers. . . . .

CXLIV.

BERLIN, 21*st April*, 1812.

Again your letter has come a day too late. Though we could not have concluded with certainty, from the delay, that

* Johannes von Müller, the celebrated author of the "Universal History" and the "History of Switzerland," the first German historian who attained literary excellence in the treatment of his subject. The great blot upon his character is his abandonment of his country's cause, and espousing the French interests in the calamitous days of October, 1806. He had drawn up the Prussian manifesto before the battle of Jena, and when the French entered Berlin on the 27th October, he was the first to announce his adhesion to the Emperor Napoleon. When the news of the battles of Jena and Auerstädt reached Berlin, and it was evident that the authorities must remove northwards, Niebuhr called on Müller to propose that they should travel together to Stettin. Müller, who had not long before been appointed historiographer, and had just comfortably settled himself and his library in his residence, replied, pointing round to his precious books, "Alas! travelling is out of the question for me; look at these; what can I do?" "The man who can think of his books *now* is a scoundrel!" muttered Niebuhr indignantly, as he turned on his heel.

it had been opened, its appearance left no doubt on this point. This must, however, explain and justify to you my silence respecting our hopes and fears, even when they positively concern our own fate. Besides, all my knowledge is confined to mere rumours. The impending stroke is preparing with a most undeniably judicious secresy. All that I can say—and that is rather based upon calculation than positive testimony—is, that none of the reports about the possible continuance of peace deserve any attention. The armies are collecting from all sides. Such enormous masses of men have never before been brought against each other in the whole course of modern history, indeed never since the Crusades and the migrations of races. The long continuance of winter weather may a little delay the opening of the campaign; for in East Prussia they are still using sledges, and when the frost breaks, the state of the roads will prevent any rapid operations for a few weeks.

Dumas is here as Intendant-general of the army. I met him at the Princess Radziwill's, and we have since exchanged visits. Nicolovius has invited him and me to dine at his house to-day. He is very friendly, and inquires very particularly after all his friends in Holstein.

And now we will retire from the outward world into our own private one. Milly is constantly unwell without being positively weak. But it pains and alarms me that the physician does not seem to know what measures to take for her relief. Her cough remains just the same in spite of all remedies. I am rather better than for some weeks past.

I have now finished the most difficult part of my book—the Roman law respecting the public lands.

I have felt the death of old Hegewisch deeply. So his fainting fits last summer were the beginning of his gradual decay. People in Germany were no longer just to him. His best writings were forgotten. . . . .

CXLV.

BERLIN, 16*th June*, 1812.

It will be an evil omen to you that Milly's pain in the eyes continues, when you see, on opening this letter, that she has again left me the greater part of the space. It is even so, &c. . . . .

We are reading Wilhelm Meister at present, as fast as my want of practice in reading aloud will permit. I had never before been able to take any pleasure in this book, and was curious to see if it would be different now, as in middle age we are less one-sided than in youth, and can enjoy relative and separate beauties, even when the whole does not make an agreeable or overpowering impression on us. But it is the same as ever with me. Our language possesses, probably, nothing more elaborate or more perfect in style (excepting Klopstock's "Republic of Letters"); in clearness of outline and vividness of colouring, there is nothing to compare with it in our literature; it contains a multitude of acute remarks and magnificent passages; the situations are managed with extreme ingenuity, and all the parts are in admirable keeping; all this I can appreciate now better than formerly. But the unnaturalness of the plot, the violence with which what is beautifully sketched and executed in single groups is brought to bear upon the development, and mysterious conduct of the whole, the impossibilities such a plot involves, and the thorough heartlessness, which even makes one linger with the greater interest by the utterly sensual personages, because they do show something akin to feeling; the villainy or meanness of the heroes, whose portraits nevertheless often amuse us,—all this still makes the book revolting to me, and I get disgusted with such a menagerie of tame cattle.

Is it not your feeling, too, that few things leave a more painful impression than for a great spirit to bind its own wings, and seek to excel in the lower regions of art, while renouncing the higher? Goethe is the poet of human passion and human greatness under all their manifestations,

and as such he appears in his early poems. Probably, indeed, he might then have made himself master of the whole sphere, to the furthest limits of which he was often involuntarily borne on the wings of spontaneous inward impulse. He neglected to possess himself of this united realm, which perhaps no single intellect had ever ruled with so absolute a sway as might have been his, and the wild and fragmentary character of his youthful productions displeased even himself in his riper years. It was chiefly after he had studied art, during his travels in Italy, that he strove after unity and completeness. His first attempts in this style, and his productions from 1786 to 1790, are quite unworthy of him. They simply display a thoroughly unpoetical, wearisome reality. But he wished to become a master in this style as well as in others, and to do so, he narrowed his mind. To me this is most melancholy. If you study his writings from this time forwards, you find in nearly all of them a tameness which is quite unnatural to him. By degrees, there appears some re-awakening of his native and peculiar feelings, particularly with reference to his own inward life, at least in recollection; but the years gone by are lost, and, through them, those also which yet remain to him. I hope that he will find his youth restored by living through his history again in memory. The second part will be certain to come out at Michaelmas. So early as the end of April he went to Carlsbad, to work there in solitude. They expect him back at Weimar this month. We shall not see him now this year, but I shall write to him more at length when I send him my second volume.

The physical sciences had been so exclusively limited to what was visible and demonstrable, that a reaction was inevitable as soon as the one-sidedness of this was perceived; now, when you find it said, in so many words, in printed books, that a dreaming state is higher than a waking one, and that madness is the highest condition of humanity,—now the charlatans have done their worst, and the ridicule with which they have covered themselves, will soon put an

end to their trade.* The good will then remain, and a considerable interval will elapse before people can return to the old one-sided views. For, in truth, it is ever the fate of modern nations to oscillate between two follies.

Have you seen A. W. Schlegel's noble Essay on the old German poetry, in the January number of the "Deutsches Museum?"

I have filled these two pages with the things by which we try to divert our attention from the sorrow impending over all. If I could write to you on this subject, I should have much to say. . . . .

CXLVI.

BERLIN, 27*th June*, 1812.

You will have seen from the proclamation of the Emperor Napoleon, that the war has actually begun by this time. We know nothing here as yet of the events that have happened.

We have not yet finished "Wilhelm Meister;" the latter part pleases me no better. Mdlle. Kettenberg is alluded to in the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul."

You will have seen Stein's arrival in Hamburgh from the newspapers. It is said that he is going to St. Petersburgh, by invitation of the Emperor.

We are calm and composed, but not cheerful, still less mirthful, for this is a solemn and critical epoch. The war is inflicting no wounds on this part of the country, but all is sick enough, and the bleeding provinces which have to supply the resources of war, will, in time, infect the capital with their fever. The accounts from East Prussia, which had not fully recovered from the last war before this new misery began, are enough to overwhelm one with grief. . . . .

CXLVII.

BERLIN, 11*th July*, 1812.

We have no news whatever from the seat of war; it appears that we shall have to learn them first from the pages of the "Moniteur." We only know that the whole of the

* This refers to animal magnetism.

northern French army stands on Russian soil. How far the Russians have retreated, whether they make any show of offering resistance on any part of the road between the Niemen and the Dwina, probably no human being here knows. This utter silence respecting events of such prodigious magnitude, heightens the terrors of expectation. Meanwhile, it enables us to concentrate ourselves more entirely on the present, by leaving us leisure for other thoughts and occupations. . . . .

I do not even read anything requiring exertion at present, but, among other things, I have taken up Klopstock's "Correspondence." I find it very attractive, and still more instructive. The more you study it, the more materials do you find in it for the intellectual history of our nation; and it exhibits the history of Klopstock's mind, with scarcely a break, from the year 1750 onwards. In these letters his character appears indescribably amiable, sincere, and spotless, which we certainly knew before to be the case. They give a singular picture of the period in which his youth was passed. Accustomed as we are to great variety and precision of thought, the circle of ideas prevailing then seems to us poor and narrow; each one is occupied about himself; all are, we may almost say, ignorant, contented, nay, even delighted with things that we should with reason pronounce mediocre, and filled with reverence for men who would now be thought common-place; all of them are so self-important, so convinced that their united works must form a golden age of literature. And for this reason they have all faded and passed away, except Klopstock, who, in his innocence, was far enough from suspecting how little they were his equals. There is something really maidenly about him and the best of his friends, not only in the good sense of the word, but in that which is incompatible with the manly character, particularly in that limitation of their range of thought I have mentioned. From the beginning to the end of his correspondence, you could not perhaps find a single uncommon, or even ingenious idea, nor yet in any of his works, except the "Republic of Letters." It is possible that

such ideas, like all abstractions, are only suggested when the mental harmony is somewhat disturbed, and that he would not have retained that deep peace, in which he always lived, if he had attempted to fix his attention voluntarily and exclusively on objects of reflection. But how much higher, how near the ancients he might have stood, if he had done so,—if his cultivation had not been so extremely one-sided, and on the whole—to confess the truth—so indolently carried on! I have just been looking at several of the metres he invented, and have made a singular discovery. In the beginning of each piece, as you know, he marks the metre, and, till now, I have always read his verses as he has marked them, and often found them unpleasing, or discovered strophes where the measure was not sustained. But this time I have read them without reference to his divisions, according to the rules of Greek rhythm, with which he was quite unacquainted, and find that they then possess the most beautiful cadence of the old Greek poetry. O that he had but poured into these beautiful forms a corresponding richness of meaning! For it cannot be denied that, excepting the lays of his love, his odes do not speak to the heart at all, or only address themselves to a few of its emotions, and never fill and raise the soul as a single verse of a Greek lyric poet has power to do. The character of the women, too, is a remarkable feature of the times of Klopstock's youth. The cultivation of the mind was carried incomparably further with them, than with nearly all the young women of our days; and this we should scarcely have expected to find in the contemporaries of our grandmothers. It was not, therefore, the work of our native literature, for that first rose into being along with, and under the influence of the love inspired by these charming maidens. For some time after the Thirty Years' War the ladies of Germany, particularly those of the middle classes, were excessively coarse and uneducated, as is proved beyond a doubt by a curious Book of Manners which I have bought this winter. This wonderful alteration must have taken place, therefore, during the eighty years from 1660 to 1740, though we are quite ignorant how and when it began. . . . .

Jacobi is certainly right when he says, that it is only existence in motion which excites our interest in others—ideas as they rise up; nothing that merely rests in their memory affects our feelings towards them. Perhaps it may do so on a first acquaintance, but it soon runs dry, and then such friendship is at an end. We can never grow weary of that sound sense which on all occasions, great or small, answers to every appeal.

CXLVIII.

TO V**

BERLIN, 12*th July*, 1812.

. . . . To all that you say against a Church union,* which must end either in the subjection of our Church to the domination of the Catholic, or the destruction of that which is regarded by the latter as its essential excellence, I subscribe with all my heart; as well as to all that you say on the folly of expecting spiritual benefit from the ceremonies of the latter. With equal warmth do I sympathise in your indignation against the pseudo-Mystics; not less against those who are a prey to their own over-excited feelings, than against those who are enacting a revolting and scandalous farce.

On the other hand, I must confess that I do not coincide in the views you have expressed in your essay, respecting that which you also call Mysticism, and the philosophy of religion which you recognise as Protestantism. That you may not mistake me, however, and suppose that I lay claim to beliefs and feelings which I do not possess,—therefore dare not even seem to possess,—I must just simply repeat to you what, if I mistake not, I have said already in the conversation which your friendship has deemed it worth while to remember.

Faith, properly so called, in a much wider sense than religious faith, it is either not given to every nature to possess, or the possibility of its taking root and flourishing, may be annihilated by an inharmonious intellectual life.

* Referring to the wish, then entertained by many pious persons, for such a reform in the Catholic Church, as should enable the Protestant to unite with it.

The soil may be fertile, but the climate ungenial. My intellect early took a sceptical direction. With my whole attention bent upon the real and the historical, eager to comprehend, and to get to the bottom of everything, I let my thoughts follow the natural association of ideas, without endeavouring to guide them into any particular channel; and in this respect had neither, properly speaking, a truly creative imagination, nor any strong feeling of the need of something beyond the boundaries of experience to satisfy my heart; or perhaps I let both perish for want of nourishment. Altogether, it was very seldom that the consciousness of a thought vanished from my mind in the contemplation of its import and object. To this, unquestionably my natural turn of mind, was added the influence of miserable religious instruction, and of the living study of classical antiquity. Thus, it was in riper years, and through the study of history, that I came back for the first time to the sacred books, which I read in a purely critical spirit, and with the purpose of studying their contents as the groundwork of one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of the world. This was not a mood in which real faith could spring up, for it was that of the Protestantism of the present day. I needed no Wolfenbuttle Fragments* to discover the discrepancies of the Gospels, and the impossibility of even drawing the outlines of a tenable history of the life of Jesus by such criticism. In the Messianic allusions to the Old Testament, I could recognise no prophecies, and could explain all the passages adduced with perfect ease. But here, as in every historical subject, when I contemplated the immeasurable gulf between the narrative and the facts narrated, this disturbed me no further. He, whose earthly life and sorrows were depicted, had for me a perfectly real existence, and his whole history had the same reality, even if it were not related with literal exactness in any single point. Hence

* The anonymous fragments on the discrepancies of the Gospel narratives, edited by Lessing while head-librarian at Wolfenbuttle. Lessing was long supposed to have written them himself, but after his death clear proofs were found among his papers that they were from the pen of Reimarus.

also the fundamental fact of miracles which, according to my conviction, must be conceded, unless we adopt the not merely incomprehensible, but absurd hypothesis, that the Holiest was a deceiver, and his disciples either dupes or liars; and that deceivers had preached a holy religion, in which self-renunciation is everything, and in which there is nothing tending towards the erection of a priestly rule—nothing that can be acceptable to vicious inclinations. As regards a miracle in the strictest sense, it really only requires an unprejudiced, and penetrating study of nature, to see that those related are as far as possible from absurdity, and a comparison with legends, or the pretended miracles of other religions, to perceive by what a different spirit they are animated.

According to these statements, I might, perhaps, fairly claim to be called a genuine Protestant Christian; to be recognised by a Church, which does not even thrust from her bosom, those who make Christ into a cunning political aspirant—a skilful charlatan and juggler—men who, it is to be hoped, will not die without receiving the punishment of indignant universal contempt, and whom you, my respected friend, no doubt likewise despise in your heart, mild as your words are with respect to these blasphemers. Nevertheless, I cannot as yet make this claim for myself, nor would Luther recognise it, for I am far from having so firm a faith in these objects, so vivid a certainty of them, as of those of historical experience; they are still only in, and among my thoughts—not external to, and above me.

In the sense in which many, and in which you in your paper, use the term Mystics, you cannot, in truth, save the Reformers themselves from this name. For are the ideas of incarnation, redemption, divine grace, any thing else than mystical? Mysticism, as I conceive, (apart from the follies that usurp the name,) is nothing else than the belief, that the pious man, only capable of longing and striving after a state of faith and Christian temper of mind, attains these through a supernatural assistance; and, when he has been made a partaker of them, may receive an illumination of the heart and mind, in a manner inexplicable by logic and

psychology, and to them foolishness. Who can deny that this may give rise to the wildest fanaticism? But, on the other hand, who can deny that people the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, have held this belief with unshakable confidence, and that the reflection of their faith shines out in their writings and deeds? This mysticism is certainly capable of taking such various shapes, that one in whom it is a spontaneous growth, and who has not been born in the Catholic Church, cannot possibly accommodate his feelings and thoughts to her unity. And yet, that it finds more nourishment in the Catholic Church than in ours, is also undeniable. Let us turn away from the misguided men, who counsel us to restore the piety, of which they have not a conception themselves, by ceremonies and sacrificial rites. But let us not refuse to recognise, that the Catholic Church speaks to the heart in many things where ours is dumb; that we must not judge of her doctrines (her tyrannical hierarchy is another matter) from their degeneration into senseless, heartless, decrepit formalisms; that a genuine mystic, like Fénélon, might develope his spiritual life with the greatest energy within her fold, without running the risk of spiritual pride, and enthusiasm in the bad sense, to which our Protestant mystics are exposed. Confession may be very unnecessary for him who acts sincerely by himself; but so is the sermon, too, for such a one; and after all, is not the latter always destitute of special application for the larger part of the hearers, while the former is quite personal? Confession may be addressed to very unworthy ministers, but are there no preachers of the same stamp? Why is it necessary for us to represent absolution in its most exaggerated form? Do we not absolve ourselves daily, without having confessed ourselves very strictly? And in what a communion of love does the truly pious Catholic stand, through the whole series of blessed spirits and saints up to the person of Christ, who, connected with him by this unbroken line, is therefore more of a mediator to him!

If, therefore, a longing, harassed, pious Protestant, in despair at the deadness of his own Church, and the waxen

image which bears her name, should cast a look of love upon the Catholic Church, while concealing her weak points from himself; if he creates an illusion for himself all the more readily because he has probably never seen her priest-craft, or not in its degeneracy,—we ought not, I think, to take offence at such a one.

Certainly, we are bound to say to one who goes too far in his admiration, do not transfer your ideal to that the reality of which you are able to test! See how the spirit, for whose sake alone, you are ready to cling with love to a figure the aspect of which would else terrify you, never penetrated its substance, and show us where it dwells in it now, and say whether necessarily in this form! See how that very tendency towards the Ideal, which has produced many of its peculiarities, when it has vanished, leaves something behind much worse than that which preceded it, as such a tendency always does; how hypocrisy and rant have grown out of asceticism, priestly tyranny out of church discipline, the wildest licence from mortification of the flesh! The forms are still there, wherever the Catholic religion exists, but if the spirit have fled from the existing forms, how can you hope to awaken it again through the outward assumption of these very forms?

Is it quite correct that the decline of religion has proceeded from the Catholic countries? A moral turpitude, which is hostile to religion, has undoubtedly always prevailed among the people of Romanic descent, but as a national characteristic, and quite apart, by the side of strict faith in the Church, or blind obedience fancying itself faith. Thus it is still at the present day.

With us, as it appears to me, indifferentism took its rise from indignation at the revolting *Orthodox* party, who persecuted the Mystics, Spener, Franke, &c. in a truly popish spirit, carrying the insolence of priestly claims to an extent that no Capuchin could exceed.* I quite understand how

* Spener and Franke were the principal authors of a revival of religion which took place in the Lutheran church, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, very similar to that which took place in England, in the eighteenth

those who lived under their rod of discipline, if they did not become mystics, should turn aside to free-thinking with bitter hatred. The real Protestant free-thinking, however, which has usurped the territory of the Church, and would fain continue to bear sway under the name of the vanquished party, appears to me to have been imported entirely from England. The freemasonry which likewise, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, spread first through North Germany, and thence into other parts, may have greatly promoted it in the first instance. Voltaire and the French "*belles lettres*" philosophy rather aided the former, than had much independent agency, except among the higher classes. In the eighteenth century, however, it was not these, but our middle classes who determined the national turn of thought in Protestant Germany.

You remind the panegyrists of the Catholic Church, with great reason, that the most beautiful hymns have been composed by Protestants. In modern times certainly, at least with very few exceptions. But have not all really exalted and elevating poems of this kind been composed by Mystics? Is there one of them that can find favour among rationalistic theologians, if it be not hacked and remodelled in all directions? Undoubtedly it is a revolting absurdity when people say religion is poetry, for the good meaning which we might put upon the expression, is its imposed, not

century, owing to the influence of the Wesleys and Whitefield. The Lutheran church had become as dead and formal, previous to this awakening, as the Church of England in the last century, but there was this great difference between the two reforms; in the dead English Church, morality was preached without those doctrines which touch the heart-springs and give the languid will energy to perform the duties required; in the dead Lutheran Church, dogmas were preached to the neglect of morality and the cultivation of devotional feeling; hence the one reform brought the doctrines of the gospel forward, so prominently as sometimes to throw the inculcation of morality into the back-ground, while the other neglected positive dogmas, in the endeavour to kindle a living flame of devotion in the heart, and to purify the life. The Pietists of Germany were persecuted by the old orthodox party nearly as much as the Methodists in England; but, happily for the Lutheran Church, their opponents did not succeed in excluding them from its pale, as was the case with the enemies of the analogous party in England. Franke was also the founder of the great Orphan House at Halle, still flourishing at the present day.

its natural one. But the root of poetry—feeling and vivid intuition—is certainly also the root of faith.

I often ask myself, what shall we come to? In Catholic countries the clergy is dying out; in a short time men will neither be able nor willing to take orders. Among ourselves we have names, and forms, and a universal dull consciousness that all is not right; every one is ill at ease; we feel like ghosts in a living body. I speak only of the Continent; for in England, I grant, Christianity stands firm as a rock, from the very fact of the innumerable sects ever newly springing up, which testify to the fertility of the soil. But I am perfectly tranquil as to the result. We shall become truer and purer, when every thing has been eliminated, which does not belong to the heart of any of the numerous sects that will then develope themselves. "Offences must come, but woe be to him by whom they come!" I would not overthrow the dead Church, but if she fall, it will cause me no uneasiness. Let us trust that a Comforter will come, a new Light, when we least expect it. All the sorrows of this era will lead on towards the truth, if we are only willing.*

CXLIX.

TO COUNT ADAM MOLTKE.

BERLIN, 15*th August*, 1812.

. . . . Perthes was here a few weeks ago; when you see him he will tell you how comfortable I am at present. How long it will continue so, I leave fearlessly to fate. Things certainly will not *remain* quite so pleasant, not only because external circumstances will almost inevitably stand in the way, but also because my outward position is really *too* enviable. Much is wanting which cannot be compensated, but this cannot be reckoned as belonging to my outward position; the latter could not possibly be more favourable in any part of Germany, though we live in the midst of a sandy desert, and far away from beautiful objects of any

* This letter should be read in connexion with those addressed to Madame Hensler, written from Rome, of 7th March, and 1st May, 1818.

description. You should allow yourself to be persuaded to carry out the plan you formerly mentioned, of residing for a time in Berlin. You, who are so fond of interesting society, could not but find this singular colony of intellectual and accomplished men, collected from all parts of Germany, exceedingly attractive, though you would not be equally pleased with what is, strictly speaking, native to the place. Before you receive my letter, Perthes will have sent you, in my name, the second volume of my History. You will see that the work here begins to take the form of a regular history, though the digressions, which you wished away in the first volume, will be found here in equal number. In the third, they will be of little importance. A deep silence still reigns in Germany; I do not know whether it is that people are startled at the new phenomenon; or whether they neither understand the style, nor enter into the mode of thought and treatment. I do not know whether I shall ever have the satisfaction of seeing the public on my side. An author ought not to make advances to the public, but it is very seldom that a great work entirely fails in gaining it over.

I shall hardly finish the third volume during this winter. I had worked myself quite stupid; complete relaxation, and the Pyrmont waters are now, however, refreshing me greatly. But, on the one hand, I must sketch the outline of a course of lectures for the winter, on Roman Antiquities, as bringing my ideas into train for the History; and, on the other, I find change of subject beneficial, and Greece allures me now with charms as strong as those she had for me in my youth. O how would philology be cherished, if people knew the magical delight of living and moving amidst the most beautiful scenes of the past! The mere reading is the smallest part of it; the great thing is to feel familiar with Greece and Rome during their most widely different periods! I wish to write history with such vividness,—so to replace vague by well-defined images,—so to disentangle confused representations, that the name of a Greek of the age of Polybius and Thucydides, or that of a Roman in the times

of Cato or Tacitus, should instantly call up in the mind the fundamental idea of their character. May I succeed in my object! There is no want of materials; we cannot excuse ourselves on that ground; if we fail, the fault lies wholly in ourselves. I should like to write, in the same way, on the golden age of Greece, then on the rise of the sciences and the decline of poetry, and on the immeasurable gulf between the age of Pericles and that of Demosthenes. I should further like to write a work on ancient literature as a whole, similar to Schlegel's "Lectures on the Drama," (which you, too, of course, think glorious?) on the lost writings, as well as those still extant, from Homer to the Byzantines.

But the Roman History shall not be neglected. What is the most likely to keep me back, is the difficulty of meeting with thoroughly good military maps, without which there is much that it is scarcely possible to describe. Fancy and divination may certainly often hit the mark; but they cannot so imperatively demand belief.

What are you working at? You scarcely allude to it, and Perthes knew nothing about it.

Farewell, my dear Moltke. Do not repay me evil for my silence, and accept, with your old affection, Milly's and my own best love to yourself and the boys.

Your faithful NIEBUHR.

CL.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, *19th August*, 1812.

. . . . . As to the aim of Wilhelm Meister, you will probably have somewhat changed your opinion by this time, as I suppose you are near the end of the book. Goethe has certainly written it, in part perhaps designedly, in part unconsciously, as a representation of the stage. The disenchantment of the enthusiast, and his picture of the universal worthlessness of the players, even of those among them who are real artists, are very likely a satire upon himself, as no one ever carried the passion for the stage, and the attempt to cultivate the taste of the players further than Goethe.

I have made another conjecture, which I cannot indeed verify in a few lines, but it might be established by a comparison of passages differing widely in other respects. It is that he meant to bring forward the following view,) at all events in the work as it now stands, for the first sketch of it was made at least as early as 1799, and was, no doubt, quite inartificial), that each will succeed best in his own style, by following out his original tastes, and cultivating them to perfection; that though there are perfectly pure and highly exalted natures, others coarse and superficial, and some even false, all are good of their kind. Further, that it is a folly to regard accidents as judgments, and the circumstances that alter the direction of our life as providential; and finally, (towards which much in the "Elective Affinities" also tends,) that what we deem our wise resolutions, will usually work much evil to ourselves and others, if they break any link in the natural chain of our destinies. I by no means commend all these views; that they are Goethe's, and contained in this book, I am ready to maintain. Many parts are, no doubt, simply poetical, without any ulterior aim, and the whole would be most likely better if there were more of the same kind.

I am now busily engaged with the Greeks. I think I never appreciated them so keenly before. Moreover, some very crude productions on the subject have given me a great inclination to use up a few sheets, in sketching a survey of the different periods of the intellectual history of the Greeks, from their golden age, to that in which they were in no way superior to ourselves.

Oersted * leaves to-morrow for the Rhine and Paris. I am really very sorry to lose him; I scarcely know another natural philosopher who has so much intellect, and freedom from prejudice and *esprit de corps:* then, too, he keeps within bounds, and never loses himself in arbitrary conjectures. Besides, his character is very estimable; and he parts from me with regret. Thank God it seems as if the dangers which threatened you were passing away.

* The celebrated natural philosopher, and author of Der Geist in der Natur.

CLI.

BERLIN, *8th September*, 1812.

. . . . It interferes much with close study that we have troops always quartered upon us, and that they are perpetually changing.

During this vacation, I have been reviewing all kinds of books, not without a reference to the circumstances of the times. But I have another object, namely, to earn some money for a friend who wants it. I find reviewing no pleasant task; I should like to get hold of books that I could really take pleasure in, and recommend, but I very seldom hit upon such; most of those which come before me are a tissue of shallowness and error, often, too, of gross ignorance, in which I really cannot find anything to praise.

I continue to take the waters, and thereby lose a great deal of time. The time for my lectures, too, is approaching, but that does not alarm me, as I mean to deliver them extempore, and have most of my materials already stored up in my memory. This course will be a very useful one for the young men.

I began reading Plato a short time ago. Theages is still my favourite, of the dialogues that I have read afresh; the declaration of the young man, that he feels himself better and higher, if he is only in the same house with Socrates, and the more so, the nearer he is to him, and the most so, when he can look into his eyes and read his soul, is worth more to me than the most acute dialectics, where you have to toil through ever so many long dialogues, and gain nothing at the end. But such an evidence of emotions which we have experienced, and still experience ourselves, when we think of any of the few great men of our own day, is worth much. I have also been reading a tragedy of Sophocles again, and was glad to find that I was more moved by it than I had ever been before. . . . . .

CLII.

BERLIN, *2nd October*, 1812.

For the last week past, our slumbering anxieties respecting Denmark have been revived, and in a way that makes it difficult to calm them by unbelief. You say nothing on this subject, perhaps lest we should be alarmed, perhaps for the same reasons which kept us silent, when we knew more about the progress of the war than the papers told us. But it seems almost impossible for the storm to blow over, and whatever may be its issue, it will bring misery and calamity to our poor fatherland. This apprehension lies heavy on my heart, but of course I cannot tell you in writing the possibilities I fear. Devastation is now proceeding with fearful strides, from the deserts that are forming in Russia, to the total failure of the crops in Norway. I am not ashamed to confess to the selfishness of affection, and that amidst all these horrors, I am thinking with a heavy heart of the misfortune which the paper currency will bring on my nearest and dearest friends. . . . .

I have seen here a collection of antique works of art, which is quite unique. It was made by Klaproth, and belongs to him, but he is of such a retiring disposition that its very existence is news to every one to whom I mention it. The collection consists of antique works in glass; some are mosaic, some transparent, some opaque glass of the most exquisite colours. Two singularly-shaped pieces have come from Guinea, where they have been used as sceptre points by the negro princes. There cannot be the least doubt that they have travelled thither from Carthage. Klaproth has also some fragments of metal mirrors, where the proportions are precisely those of Herschel's telescope. The Greeks were no artists in chemistry, and the Romans knew absolutely nothing of it; hence it is only through analysis and actual observation that we discover how, *even in these things*, we stand below the ancients. Stranger still; many chemical preparations, colours for instance, were still handed down by tradition, and kept as a secret in the sixteenth century, that

are now lost, and seem to have been invaluable. Science is advancing very rapidly now, but she is grown an utter stranger to art.

CLIII.

TO PERTHES.*

October, 1812.

Our dear Nicolovius lost no time in conveying to me the good news he had heard from you. I have not seen him again since then, and do not know whether he is writing to you; if he has not time to do so, I know I may say, in his name as well as our own, how much we are pleased, and wish you and your dear wife joy from the bottom of our hearts. When the little boy is as old as one of us (you or I), and is talking with his gray-haired parents about the evil times when he was born, I trust he will be able to thank Heaven for having lived from his youth in so fresh a period of regeneration, and revival from desolation; and that it will be a better founded prosperity than that which followed the Seven Years' War. You see that I expect good days for you and your wife yet.

Do works of art, if not very expensive, still find a sale in your provinces? (I consider you as sovereign of the publishing trade from the Ems to the Baltic.) There is coming out here, but it has not yet appeared, and the price is not fixed, a very beautiful set of "Studies from the old Italian

* Perthes was one of the largest booksellers and publishers in Germany, a man of uncommon energy, enterprise, and good sense. He was a friend of many of the most distinguished men of his day, and was intimately connected with the Holstein circle, among whom Niebuhr passed his early years, from whom he imbibed much of their peculiar religious tendency. He was a determined opponent of the French rule in Germany, and took so active a part in the insurrection which freed Hamburgh from the French yoke for a short time in 1813, that, on the return of Davoust, he was proscribed. His friendship with Niebuhr began when both were young, and lasted through life, though its continuance was threatened in the winter of 1813-14, because Niebuhr would not concede the honour to the conduct of Hamburgh which Perthes thought it deserved, and, in the "Preussische Correspondent," compared it, in a depreciating style, with the heroism of Prussia. Nicolovius, however, prevented a breach, and from this time they remained in habits of the most friendly intercourse.

Masters," (*i.e.*, Giotto, Gaddi, and Masaccio,) by an artist named Kuhbeil, who is as poor as a rat, has lived upon contemplation and labour in Italy, mended his own shoes, &c. Some of them are from the pieces which the Riepenhausens have copied, but, according to the testimony of eye-witnesses, incomparably more faithful. There are really sublime things among them. Nicolovius takes a great interest in the work. Should you be able to assist its circulation? By the by, it is remarkable that, even in France, people are beginning to suspect that this old art was really in spirit the highest, and that while Raphael, who may bear the same relation to these old masters as Sophocles to the earliest lyric poets, rose to the very summit of art,—with him likewise, the inspiration of genius departed. When you see a light breaking in upon questions like these, upon which you have made up your own mind in silence for years, it reconciles you to much else that displeases you in your contemporaries. It has given me downright delight to see the Leipsic Catalogue so thin; only two pages of novels! I must confess that it looks very miserable in other respects, too. The Catalogue, you will bring out, will not be much calculated to bring our literature into repute among foreigners.

What will become of poor Denmark? . . . . Are not you, too, startled at the Sicilian constitution? (The "Hamburgische Correspondent" has, no doubt, given you an account of it.) Don't you see that it is altogether the work of the aristocracy? It is true that many grievances are cleared away at a stroke, over which travellers have lamented, for the last forty years, as hindrances to prosperity; and the island may become wealthy; but how can there be tranquillity? Every thing will go on seething and fermenting. England sends forth in all directions, probably quite unsuspected by the ministers, a spirit of republicanism, which will make that country as much disliked by all sovereigns and governments, as it is already by their subjects for its conduct with regard to their commercial and manufacturing interests. The emancipation of the Irish Catholics is a crisis in the

English Constitution itself, through which the republican portion of their institutions receives increased power, and H—— is certainly quite wrong in asserting that the English will end with an absolute monarchy. They are much more likely to try a republic, unless fate has pre-ordained it otherwise.

CLIV.

TO JACOBI.

BERLIN, *November* 21*st*, 1811.

HONOURED JACOBI,—

How I am to begin the first letter after a silence of many years—how I am to select the most essential particulars from among the thousand things I might say to you—how I am to arrange these most essential points, on which I would fain speak unreservedly, in any kind of order, is an enigma which I can find no means of solving. . . . .

That you have sent me your work, which I received a few days ago from our dear and noble Nicolovius as a gift from you, has afforded me an encouragement, for which, however, I should not have waited before approaching you once more. Perhaps you have already received the first part of my Roman History through Lindner; at all events it will most probably be in your hands before this letter reaches you. May you accept it with as much kindness and indulgence as I feel gratitude and affection for your gift; may you be able to connect it with long-past years, the broken thread of which has for me been re-united by this token of remembrance from you!

I still remember most vividly—as it is impossible that you should do—how, in the years of my ardent youth, I sat at your feet, rejoicing in the kindness with which you listened to my dreams of the possibility that I might one day be capable of restoring the history of antiquity, and encouraged me to work towards their realisation. I must confess, that you will not find the ideal which then stood before me, fulfilled in the attempt to transform these dreams into waking realities, which I have at last undertaken, after many,

and in some degree wasted years, and with but the remnants of my original powers. Yet I am equally convinced that you will not regard as insignificant my diligent and not quite fruitless researches, nor look on some of their results as mere creations of the brain, though at first they will be so termed by many till they have grown accustomed to the unusual shapes. And if you do find that you may say of the difference between the early ideal and the later reality, that the amphora has been turned into a pot, yet coarse potter's ware cannot be dispensed with, and the man who can make no better is sufficiently punished by his incapacity.

To know you, to see and hear you, was one of the highest enjoyments of those few years of my youth, which succeeded a period of frequent depression, and were passed in the intoxication of brilliant day-dreams—in a sort of heaven upon earth. It was not that my youthful vanity was flattered by your kindness, it was a pure and perfectly innocent sentiment. That it was so is proved, perhaps, most incontestably by another sentiment which grew up beside it, and at last, like the lean kine of the seer, swallowed it up, and brought about my separation from you.

I have indeed now no right to make confessions, but here they cannot be avoided.

I was born with an inward discord, the existence of which I can trace back to my earliest childhood, though it was afterwards much aggravated by an education ill adapted to my nature, or rather, by a mixture of such an education with no education at all. I did not conceal this from you in former days. Had I to choose my own endowments for another life on earth, I would not wish to possess greater facility in taking up impressions from the external world, in retaining and combining them into new forms within an inward world of imagination, full of the most various and animated movement, nor a memory more accurate or more at command (a faculty inseparable from the former) than nature has granted me. Much advantage might have been derived from these gifts in childhood; perhaps, in some pursuits, they might have ensured me every success;

nay, this result would have arisen spontaneously, had I not been subjected to a kind of education, which could only have been useful to a mind of precisely the opposite description.

Our great seclusion from the world, in a quiet little provincial town, the prohibition, from our earliest years, to pass beyond the house and garden, accustomed me to gather the materials for the insatiable requirements of my childish fancy, not from life and nature, but from books, engravings, and conversation. Thus, my imagination laid no hold on the realities around me, but absorbed into her dominions all that I read—and I read without limit and without aim—while the actual world was impenetrable to my gaze; so that I became almost incapable of apprehending anything which had not already been apprehended by another—of forming a mental picture of anything which had not before been shaped into a distinct conception by another. It is true that, in this second-hand world, I was very learned, and could even, at a very early age, pronounce opinions like a grown-up person; but the truth in me and around me was veiled from my eyes—the genuine truth of objective reason. Even when I grew older, and studied antiquity with intense interest, the chief use I made of my knowledge, for a long time, was to give fresh variety and brilliancy to my world of dreams. From the delicacy of my health, and my mother's anxiety about it, I was so much confined to the house that I was like a caged bird, and lost all natural spirit and liveliness, and the true life of childhood, the observations and ideas of which must form the basis of those peculiar to a more developed age, just as the early use of the body is the basis of its after training. No one ever thought of asking what I was doing, and how I did it; and it was not until my thirteenth year, that I received any regular instruction. My friends were satisfied with seeing that I was diligently employed, and that, though I had at first no teaching, I was equal to boys of my age in things for which they had had regular masters, and soon surpassed them when I had the same advantages, while, moreover, I was as well acquainted with a thousand matters, to be learned from books, as a grown-up man. Yet, after a

time, I began to grow uneasy; I became aware that, notwithstanding my empire in the air, my life in the actual world was poor and powerless; that the perception of realities alone possesses truth and worth; that on it are founded all imaginative productions which have any value at all, and that there is nothing truly worthy of respect but that depth of mind which makes a man master of truth in its first principle. As soon as I had to enter on the sciences, properly so called, I found myself in a difficulty, and, unfortunately, I took once more the easiest path, and left on one side whatever cost me some trouble to acquire. I was often on the verge of a mental revolution, but it never actually took place; now and then, indeed, I planted my foot on the firm ground, and, when that happened, I made some progress.

When I first became acquainted with you, I was happy, and I was perhaps on the way to do what is more difficult than to gain knowledge without help from others, to restore what was distorted in me to its right place. But at a later period, when I left my quiet and healthful position, for a superficial world, which held me with a strong grasp, and confused and deadened my mind,—where I was dragged along a path which I had no wish to tread, and which led me further and further from that for which I helplessly longed; where I was forced to endure applause and praise, at a time when my want of knowledge on essential points, and the superfluous matter with which I had loaded my memory on others, my unsettled, disconnected ideas without true basis, my undisciplined powers without adequately firm habits of work, particularly of self-improvement, rendered me a horror to myself—I was as unhappy as you saw me to be.

However, my eyes were opened to much that had hitherto escaped me, and I was to some degree forced into the actual external world, by my travels beyond the sea, and my residence among a nation distinguished by sober thought and resolute activity, where I was obliged to occupy myself with the objects of practical life, and saw this life ennobled by the perfection to which it was carried, and the invariable adaptation of the means to the end. I then starved out the

imaginative side of my nature, and placed myself, as it were, under a course of mental diet, according to which I lived for a long time in absolute dependence on the actual world around me. But this did not bring me into the right path of my true inward activity and development. I felt that I was now, on the other hand, poorer than ever, as regarded what had always possessed the strongest attraction for me, though I seemed to be excluded from it by an insurmountable barrier. For years, I was immersed, as far as my occupations were concerned, in the most prosaic work-a-day life, with the pain and torment of feeling that I grew more used to it every day, of feeling that I was shut out of Paradise, but that the bread I gained by tilling the earth in the sweat of my brow, was not at all distasteful to me, nay that, perhaps, if Paradise were re-opened to me, I should still feel some longing for the spade.

In this mood—amid my then habitual employments—at a time when, as it seemed to me, I never rose above mere mechanical work, and even this was but seldom of a literary kind—I was ashamed to appear before those who belonged to a higher sphere. It had formerly given me pain that you were too kind towards me,—a pain arising from the double consciousness that you recognised the roots, though they had brought forth no tree, but only tangled underwood, and were awaiting with friendly indulgence the growth of one of these wild shoots into a tree, and then that you attached over much value to what was but outside appearance in me, though an appearance with which I honestly wished to deceive no one; *now*, however, I felt before you and others as Lais before her mirror. Why I felt this most strongly of all towards you, might be said to any one except yourself, not to you, or you would think I sought to regain your favour by flattery. It is true, indeed, that I would fain win it back by soft words—for soft words are the language of love.

Singular circumstances removed me from Copenhagen soon after you had left Holstein. A protecting angel watches over me. Our first entrance into this city was simultaneous with the dissolution of the State to which I had gone over,

and now, amidst distress and grief, I went through scenes far more remarkable than any in my whole former life. My position was perpetually fluctuating; I was forced to struggle, to act with foresight, to be cool and resolute. It was a great tragedy, and no longer the tedious drama of my former tame middle-class life. I learnt to stake my all at every step on a pin's head, and fortune was on my side. The wreck on which I had pumped so long was cast on shore, and behold! on this shore I found the home of my youthful aspirations, leisure that I could devote to research and letters, surrounded by highly favourable and very agreeable circumstances.

Can you, and will you, once more extend your hand and your affections to one who has strayed so far? Will you not, at least, receive him again as the Prodigal Son?

I certainly cannot say all I should like to say on the subject of your work, as far as I have read and comprehended it, on half a page, &c.

Farewell, dearest Jacobi! May I see you once more, and in such a manner that our meeting may give you pleasure, and I may be better able than in former days, to seize every moment of the fleeting time!

FROM GOETHE TO NIEBUHR ON RECEIVING THE SECOND VOLUME OF HIS HISTORY OF ROME.

When I received your kind letter in Carlsbad, there was nothing I wished for more, than that your second volume had arrived at the same time with your letter; for when there, I am at liberty to devote several days together to one subject, and to what subject could I better devote them than to your work? Now I have been already eight weeks in Weimar, and spent three in Jena, and have rarely been fortunate enough to keep my attention uninterruptedly fixed on one topic even for a few consecutive hours. At the present moment, it is only by making a firm resolution and a determined effort, that I can accomplish this communication with you.

My interest in your labours is undiminished; indeed, it is always on the increase. Suffer me here to speak in general terms, rather than in details! The Past can be made present to the inward eye and imagination, by contemporaneous written monuments, annals, chronicles, documents, memoirs, or whatever else they may be called. These place in our hands an immediate portion of that time itself, which gives us pleasure just as it is, but which we, for the sake of others, or from a hundred various impulses and aims, seek to cast into a new form. We do it, we remould the given materials, and how? As poets, as rhetoricians! This has been done from the earliest times, and these methods of treatment exert great influence; they take possession of the imagination and the feelings, they give food to the mind, strengthen the character, and arouse to action. It is a second world, which has swallowed up the first. Conceive, then, the feelings of men when the second world is destroyed, and the first does not come forth perfect to view!

The critical science which strikes in pieces the accumulations of later ages, and, where it cannot wholly restore the original edifice, at least arranges the fragments, and affords glimpses of their mutual relations, is most welcome to all who would fain see events once more as the ancients saw them. But ordinary men of the world have no such wish, and they are right.

Allow me here to pass over a chasm. Had we lived together; had I had the good fortune to have been acquainted years ago with your investigations, I would have advised you to follow the example of the noble and amiable St. Croix, and to entitle your work, "A Criticism of the Authors who have handed down the Roman History to our times." But to me the book is the book, and, as you know, titles are a modern invention. Accept, therefore, my expression of the pleasure it has given me, to find that your opinions coincide with mine on all essential points concerning the world and its races; accept my thanks for having once more rendered the Roman history a source of enjoyment to me, by con-

scientiously bringing to light its stationary and retrograde periods. For what man of sense will deny that he has often felt the presence of some error in his picture of those times, when an Iliad of such varied scenes,—such an endless succession of glorious heroes, the four thousand Fabii included,—achieve so little in four hundred years, that the city, the State, which had just for the first time after infinite toil got rid of the Philistines of Veii, is destroyed on the Alia like any little provincial town, so that they have to begin again from the beginning? But when the matter is placed clearly and plainly before us from your point of view, this reflects no discredit, but rather honour upon that people. I must pass to another topic.

You throw the whole blame of the retrograde movement on the aristocracy, you espouse the side of the plebeians; and this is right and allowable in an impartial investigator, at a period when both have ceased to exist. One more general remark, with which I will conclude. Every state is aristocratic in its commencement; it can only extend its power by means of the masses, which are kept at a distance and kept down, till they obtain equal rights for themselves; from this moment monarchy becomes desirable, and is infallibly introduced, and then many courses—some of progress, some of retrogression—are open to the community. For all three states, (state is a stupid word, for nothing stands fixed, and all is changeful,) all three relations suffer from Change, which makes a sport of what is right and great, even as of what is bad and mean, that all may be fulfilled.

By what I have written (I look back but for one moment), though it may sound somewhat strange, I hope to convince you that no one can take a deeper interest in your labours than I do, even in their smallest details. Your two volumes —and the third, and its successors when they appear—will always accompany me wherever my varying year may lead, and neither you nor I can foresee the whole extent of my obligations to you; genuine activity of mind is alone refreshing. Mountain and valley never meet, but wandering

men may, and why should not I hope to fall in with you somewhere? Let me add to this letter, as I should like to do to every one I send, the *clausula salutaris*, may you see in it cordiality and good intentions, if not insight and adequate comprehension! With best wishes,

GOETHE.

JENA, *23rd November*, 1812.

CLV.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, *11th December*, 1812.

I willingly recognise Herder's great qualities, and they re-appeared in all their vigour as he lay upon his death-bed. During the latter half of his life they had been obscured. This idea has been expressed on one occasion lately, in a very striking manner, but we must look deeper for its cause. Herder was no longer the same man when he ceased to be religious. (That was the case before he published his book on the "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry;" but the most beautiful portions of this work had been written at an earlier period.) A discord then arose in his mind which tortured him as long as Hamann lived, and ended, after the death of the latter, in his making poetic-religious quibbles; for the "Discourse on Immortality," the "Essay on St. John," &c., are nothing more. He still desired to maintain a harmony with his earlier tone of expression, and yet he was animated by a different spirit. He was proud, and loved power. See how he treated the elder Spalding even in early life. And his after conduct towards Spalding, the way in which he contrived to get his own letters back from him, was absolutely dishonest. To place himself even on a level with Goethe, without presumption, he ought to have had clearness of intellect; but, on the contrary, he is only effective, and able to produce a really deep impression, where he speaks vaguely and suggestively, and excites emotion; as a philosopher he is common-place. In his later writings, there is much that is quite intolerable, and the more so because you here and there recognise in their pages, the distorted lineaments

of his youthful beauty. Nothing but the memory of his early greatness, and Goethe's own kindly heart, could have made the latter so gentle and forbearing towards Herder, as he remained for many years. Herder hated Kant for having reviewed his "Ideen." He wanted to press Goethe, among others, into the service of his philosophical crusade against Kant, with whose writings Goethe was probably only partially acquainted, and in which he found much that was uncongenial to his nature, though he recognised in them the greatness of their author. You say, Goethe would not have printed this, had Herder or his wife been still living. Certainly not; but it would have been because his whole book is written in such a mild and gentle spirit, and because he would not have chosen to hurt the feelings of a noble-minded woman, or a really extraordinary man; which Herder certainly was, though he was much less in mature years than, I will not say, he promised to be, but actually was, in his youth. . . . .

Epidemic typhus is raging in Königsberg; six physicians have died of it already. The hospitals can no longer contain the sick and wounded, and it is necessary to quarter them in private houses. Heaven knows whether they will be able to manage in any other way here, if the army should encamp on the Vistula. Else we have been remarkably fortunate, hitherto. When the town is fully garrisoned, I have to maintain an officer and three privates; but we are frequently without these guests. . . . .

CLVI.

TO PERTHES.

December, 1812.

We are reading the "Nibelungen Lied" with Nicolovius, who is attending Zeuner's lectures upon it; his delight in the poem gives me a permission to indulge mine, undisturbed by the sneers which it has been the fashion to bestow on it among the *beaux esprits*, ever since the golden age of 1780. We are building castles in the air about making the study of the old German language an essential part of philology, and of all scholastic education; about

school editions of Ulphilas, King Alfred, Ottfried, &c., school dictionaries, and exercises in old Frankish, Anglo-Saxon, and Gothic; and then, of course, we must have a professorship established for these languages at the university, to which I should like to see the inseparable brothers Grimm appointed. Have you yet got the Hildebrand and Hathubrand?* In them I find the other end of the fallen-in gallery, the opposite end of which I have discovered in antiquity, and from which I shall begin to clear out the rubbish in my third volume.

I sympathise in the pleasure you have received from Goethe's second volume, dear Perthès; I have just received another very friendly letter from him, which attracts me towards him more than ever. But yet I cannot help feeling that I would much rather see him a downright heathen poet, than in this priestly vesture (in the objectionable passage) which he does not know how to wear. I stand to my opinion, and appeal again to the similar feeling it excited in N * * *, that Goethe confounds sacraments with ceremonies, and has no proper idea of a sacrament at all, for which certainly no other reason can be given than that which Claudius assumes, and has given. Now it is positively painful to me, that a confused use of terms should be favoured in this way, and that the empty praters, of whom there are so many, should be encouraged to pretend that they regard every ceremony to which they happen to take a fancy, as a sacrament, because they have the highest authority on their side. You are very likely already aware that Neander is invited to come to our university. As to Julian, I believe that he was animated partly by a just hatred against Constantine, partly by indignation at the meanness of the priests; and partly, that his highly poetical and princely mind rendered him adverse to the new religion. He looked on the hierarchy only as a means to his end. He must have been unacquainted with antiquity to be able to submit himself at any time to the new order of things. . . . .

* An epic poem, written in the eighth or ninth century, of uncertain authorship.

CLVII.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, *9th January*, 1813.

According to all appearances, our whole position is now very critical; and if we had been plunged suddenly from the unbroken peace in which we lived years ago, into our present circumstances, we should, perhaps, have found it difficult to maintain our cheerfulness and composure. The gentle education of fate gradually accustoms the unarmed citizen, as well as the soldier, to danger, and begets a happy fatalistic levity, a trust that the evil times will not be quite unbearable, and perhaps the cloud will pass over our heads without breaking. We have nothing like rumours of peace. A circumstance that will increase the general misery is, that the murrain among the cattle is now prevailing in all parts of Poland, and has shown itself in West Prussia and elsewhere on our borders. To keep it out, by laying an embargo, is, under present circumstances, as good as impossible, as there is nothing like a police force in any part of the country. In Königsberg the deaths are over a hundred a week, mostly of typhus fever; the usual average is thirty-five. Dumas was in Elbing a short time since, and had nearly recovered from the fever; but I hear he complains that his memory is much affected by it. However, he will most likely resume his functions. We are expecting Grénier's division here next week, which will necessitate the quartering of a great number of troops upon the inhabitants, probably for a considerable time, even if an army should be collected on the banks of the Oder.

I was interrupted, while writing the above, by the intelligence, that so far from the Russians having entered Königsberg peacefully, the above named division had arrived there on the third, and when our informant left, a battle was being fought before the gates of the city, which is probably, by this time, suffering all the horrors of war.

Milly has a return of her bad cough, which had been much less troublesome; it makes me very uneasy. I am perfectly

well, but do not get much work done. I cannot keep my thoughts from wandering at such a time. I shall not be able to *finish off* any thing at present, but I must endeavour to turn the time to some account, by collecting materials and performing preliminary tasks.

I am quite of your opinion that an active life, of short duration, is far preferable to a lengthened one passed more languidly. . . . .

CLVIII.

BERLIN, 22*nd January*, 1813.

I could only give hints about the destruction of the great army when I wrote to you, not describe it in its full magnitude, as we knew it already. Of 400,000 men, exclusive of the Austrians, Saxons, and the corps of Macdonald, (which was composed of Prussians and Grandjean's division,) who marched into Russia, there have not been collected at the Vistula, from all quarters, 10,000 men sound and able to bear arms.

Our position is critical, and was for some days perilous. The people are in a most excited state; I cannot say that this first showed itself since the destruction of the army, for it appeared several times very plainly, even so early as the summer; you will understand that I could not refer to it in my letters. On the Emperor's birthday there was quite a tumultuous outbreak. Of course, during the last few months, it has been impossible for such expressions of feeling to take place; but there have been daily affrays. The people could not be made to refrain from ridiculing and insulting the French, although the city was so strongly garrisoned.

We have received a promise that 2000 of our own troops shall march in on Tuesday. If so, we are safe, and can await in peace the issue of affairs. The Russians may arrive here in a fortnight. Their behaviour throughout the country is exemplary. It seems as if their great deeds and great sacrifices had ennobled the whole nation. The peasants are hastening to remove their more valuable property from the

country into the city; some, perhaps, for fear of the Cossacks, (who often, however, pay ready money,) but most, because they hear that the French are laying waste all the plains with fire.

For the last two days, the fugitives from the Vistula have been coming in; a spectacle that I cannot describe. This is by far the most memorable epoch of my life; no danger, no difficulties it may involve, could make me wish it erased. These things ought to be witnessed close at hand. And courage comes, one knows not how.

Since the return of the Emperor from Moscow, the universal cry has been, let us free ourselves! The Court has not been able to decide upon any sudden step, but has been negotiating with Austria, with whom we are to maintain a close alliance. Whether this will be possible, when the Russians are in the country, and find themselves supported by public opinion, the event will show. There is a considerable force collected in Silesia: what may be expected of a Prussian army in the cause of France, has been shown by the corps of General York, whose example is decisive on that point.* A corps under General Bülow, consisting of trained soldiers disbanded in winter, is stationed on the marsh near the Oder. The decision of our fate, in all respects, is now closely impending. I have so completely dissolved all connexion with the government, that there is, perhaps, only a single man in it who could dream of entrusting any office to me. I do not like to be useless, but our administration is not such as I could work with. On the contrary, I feel more inclined to connect myself with the military service. I have made the only step in my power

* The Prussian contingent, under General York, had been cut off from the army of Macdonald, by General Diebitsch, on which, York concluded a separate convention with the latter for the safety of his troops, by which his corps, amounting to 15,000 men, were to remain neutral for two months. The King at first disavowed this convention, and conferred the command on General Kleist, but York refused to acknowledge the proclamation to this effect, which appeared in the Gazette, till he was formally superseded by the arrival of his successor, and meanwhile, affairs advanced so rapidly as to change the whole policy of Prussia.

towards this, by applying for an appointment on the general staff. I will write to you again on Tuesday; but it will be by post, so you will have to draw inferences from hints. Our correspondence will be unavoidably interrupted by the entrance of the Russians, Heaven grant not for long. It is worth while to live through such a period, but one cannot yet breathe quite freely.

CLIX.

29th January, 1813.

. . . . It was a false report that the French troops were going to occupy the fortresses on the Oder, and that we should have the comfort of a Prussian garrison. We have still an extremely strong French one; also many sick and wounded in the city; a post-office is established in our house.

Dumas was expected here to-day. The French say that he will not remain here, but go to Mayence, where the head quarters are to be fixed for the present. . . . .

CLX.

BERLIN, *13th February*, 1813.

. . . . The crowd of volunteers, coming to enlist, is as great to-day in front of the Town Hall, as it is before a baker's shop in a famine. But to give you an idea of the zeal, with which everybody here is pressing forward to inscribe their names in the volunteer rifle detachment, I must tell you this. It is only three days since the formation of this corps was announced, and to-day the post* is going out with nine extra carriages full of the recruits, besides those who go on foot, or by other conveyances. This is naturally, too, only a very small part of those who have enlisted, for the greater part have business to settle and equipments to provide, before they can leave. Among the volunteers are young men of all classes, students from the university and public schools;

* The diligences in Prussia are a government undertaking, and always termed "post," as well as the carriages, answering to our postchaises, which are termed "extra-post."

clerks from warehouses, apothecaries, journeymen from all the trades, middle-aged officers of rank and standing, fathers of families, &c., &c.

CLXI.

TO PERTHÈS.

February, 1813.

It has just occurred to me that I have never thanked you for your copy of Neander's "Julian." You have not praised it too highly beforehand. The subject is such that the author must either become a favourite with his reader, or make himself positively disagreeable to him. With me he has become a great favourite. I think his views clear, correct, and candid; the whole book is written in a deeply truthful spirit, which is truly refreshing to me, because it is so rare in these days; and I rejoice in the love which the upright and pious historian bears to the noble-hearted man, who was only outwardly in error. For this, however, he has been punished by the anathemas of the stupid zealots, and, as if this thirteen hundred and fifty years of purgatory were not enough, by the mingled delight and contempt, with which he was regarded by the "philosophes du 18me siècle." It is to be hoped, that Neander has now accomplished his salvation, and that he will become as great a favourite with really pious people, as he must have been with your father-in-law,* when he published the Hymn to the Sun, with annotations. Nicolovius has likewise read the book, and approves it highly. We both wish to have Neander here as theological professor. Probably, some time will elapse, before you will have the pleasure we are now enjoying, for Goethe's second volume has reached us. While it is throughout as masterly a performance as the first, it is perhaps less pleasing; for his loves are certainly no Gretchens; his college life not his childhood; and literature a much less entertaining subject than the old imperial city. It vexes me, too, to read what is a godsend to the promoters of abuses, and cannot be sincere in Goethe's mouth, namely,

* Claudius.

his defence of the Catholic sacraments. I well know what may be said in their favour, but *that* Goethe plainly never thought of saying, and his representations must be offensive to both parties. His account of the development of his own mind, which is evidently quite trustworthy, is inexpressibly striking, so completely irrespective of all the influences of ancient literature, and yet so entirely after the manner of the ancients, by nourishment of the most various kinds drawn directly from the present realities of life, combined with the restless, ever brightly burning fire in his own bosom. Goethe has sent me a very friendly message by a traveller, saying he wishes much to see me, which I shall therefore make arrangements to bring about next year, if God will.

CLXII.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, *6th March*, 1813.

It is a pity that I have only time for a few lines to you to-day; in such haste I cannot conclude nor fill up the details of Milly's account;* so you must be satisfied with fragments. The day before yesterday, both Berlin and Frankfort on the Oder were evacuated by the French; they are slowly retreating hence in the direction of Wittenberg. Our festival, the day before yesterday, was overclouded by the burning of the suburbs of Spandau, and they have likewise laid the suburbs of Küstrin in ashes. We shall soon see whether they mean to hold Glogau and Stettin. These towns are, like Spandau, easy to take; but it is different with Küstrin, which can only be dismantled. Winzingerode's corps is pressing forward through Lusatia. The light troops are probably already in Dresden. The electorate of Saxony may become the scene of important events in this war. The Cossacks say they are going to Paris; they have a most original appearance; they bivouac with their horses in the city; about four in the

* Of the retreat of the French, the entrance of the Russians, and the universal rejoicings

morning they knock at the doors and ask for breakfast. This is a famous time for the children, for they set them on their horses and play with them. Some Calmuck and Baschkir troops have also been here, but few of them have remained in the town. Even the Cossacks point to the latter, as to a kind of extraordinary animal.

You cannot picture to yourself the joy of the whole city on their entrance, and they are welcomed in the same way in all parts of the country. Russia and Prussia are like brothers together. I do not yet know what my work will be. To sit idle here, is what I cannot endure. My health will hardly allow me to serve as a volunteer. I have sent an urgent entreaty to one of the generals, who is a friend of mine, to take me as his secretary in the general staff; but he is trying to get me a higher appointment. Milly, my anxious, tender Milly, is satisfied whatever be my fate. Farewell! Our hearts are with you, whatever befal.

CLXIII.

BERLIN, 22*nd, evening.*

. . . . I come from an employment in which you will hardly be able to fancy me engaged—namely, exercising. Even before the departure of the French, I began to go through the exercise in private, but a man can scarcely acquire it without companions. Since the French left, a party of about twenty of us have been exercising in a garden, and we have already got over the most difficult part of the training. When my lectures are concluded, which they will be at the beginning of next week, I shall try to exercise with regular recruits during the morning, and as often as possible practise shooting at a mark. At such a time, it is worth a great deal to be regularly trained to arms, and it may become a matter of absolute necessity; for we are daily expecting the publication of a law on the Landwehr. It is not yet known whether it is the intention of the government merely to have a Landwehr formed, so that it may be called out eventually and joined to the army, in case the enemy should recover ground again, or whether it is intended to fill up and strengthen the

regular army with this levy as soon as it is trained. The latter course appears to me by far the best; if the French beat us in the revolutionary war by means of masses, we must beat them now by the combined force of masses, and a regular army, which they did not then possess. It seems settled that, as a preliminary step, the fortieth of the whole population are to be drawn by lot for the militia. Those only who can prove physical incapacity are exempt, together with clergymen and teachers; all other men, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, must draw lots. From the provisional decree, it seems probable that officials in actual service will be allowed to find substitutes. But as I am not really an acting official, I should certainly be liable to serve; and this being the case, it seems to be the more right and becoming course to come forward voluntarily, that is, to join some of my friends, before the lottery begins, in setting the citizens the example of willing self-devotion. By the end of a month, I hope to be as well drilled as any recruit who is considered to have finished his training. The heavy musket gave me so much trouble at first, that I almost despaired of being able to handle it; but we are able to recover the powers again that we have only lost for want of practice. I am happy to say that my hands are growing horny; for as long as they had a delicate bookworm's skin, the musket cut into them terribly.

This is certainly a very serious step, if the government are as much in earnest as they ought to be, and since all military ordinances proceed from General Scharnhorst, we may hope that all is really being done that ought to be done, and that the course chosen is the best. But unless the deliverance offered to us by the manifest and wonderful providence of God—after he has chastened us sufficiently for our deeply-rooted sins—find each of us ready to devote his life to its attainment, we cannot be saved. We must not expect the army to conquer our freedom for us; we must conquer it for ourselves, under the guidance of our older and more practised brethren. I mentioned to you, a short time since, my hopes of getting a secretaryship on the general

staff. With my small measure of physical power, I should have been a thousand times more useful in that office, than as a private soldier. Since all correspondence, even in our own country, is so fettered, I cannot quite understand what should hinder my friend from granting my request, unless it be a false delicacy about placing me in such a position to himself. Perhaps, however, it may seem odd to the King, whose consent is indispensable to my appointment. The friend I have referred to, would like me to enter the ministry, but that is more impossible than ever. Perhaps something unexpected may turn up yet. Idle, or busy about any thing but our liberation, I cannot be now. Perhaps I could aid it by editing a newspaper.

Not every action, professing to be dictated by patriotism and enthusiasm for freedom, is pure; but none can doubt that there are great sacrifices made from the highest motives. Thus, for instance, a M. Von St. (an officer) has made a present of the whole revenue of his estates to the government, about 3,000 thalers; another gives five good working horses, all taken from his farm, to be trained as cavalry horses, 300 measures of corn, maintains a number of baggage horses, and comes forward himself, with two of his servants, all mounted, to join a troop; a Mr. Von B. (formerly an officer) offers himself, with seven or more men, all mounted and armed at his expense, to serve as privates in a cavalry regiment; a banker here has equipped and horsed, one after another, twenty volunteers; a brass-founder has enlisted with all his apprentices and journeymen, and shut up his shop. In Berlin alone, I hear that 11,000 volunteers have inscribed their names. It is so universal to go with joy that no one can make a boast of it; to betray the contrary feeling would bring disgrace. When the King wanted to leave Potsdam, a levy of horses was required; though the French were masters in the country, every horse was offered without exception. In the same way the so-called *cocked-hats* (trained soldiers, some of whom are on furlough, and the rest disbanded in ordinary times,) came forward everywhere voluntarily; they were collected under the very eyes of the French,

and sent off to Silesia. They only asked eagerly, whether it was certain they were to be led against the French, and the officers dared not assure them of it, except by hints. That these armings, and the raising and marching of the volunteers, should take place while the French army was actually occupying the country, is a most singular and notable circumstance. When the cockade was assumed here, the French unquestionably expected an insurrection. It shows the extent of their fear, that they never ventured to arrest any one; for uninterrupted communications were carried on with the Russian troops, and this was known to so many, that the French had, no doubt, full intelligence of it. In case of any emergency, I kept a pair of pistols and a musket loaded in my room. Such times form an admirable education.

I have been with some of my friends to pay my respects to General York. We owe everything to him; for, had he not decided as he did, the Russians could not have advanced till they had received large reinforcements, and by that time our own country would have been laid waste. York is certainly an excellent General; he inspires absolute confidence. The gratitude, with which he had been received, had dispelled his almost melancholy gravity, and he was very affable. He said he should not have fully justified the affection expressed towards him till he had reached the Rhine; but he knew what he had done, and how different would be the position of affairs, if he had not chosen the Right at the right moment.

You will feel it quite natural that this long letter only speaks of that which fills our souls to the exclusion of all other topics.

What Dutch and German troops are still with the French, will no doubt gradually come over; occurrences of this kind are happening daily. Yesterday, one hundred and fifty Westphalians, who had deserted from Magdeburg, entered our gates with their trumpeter at their head, escorted by Cossacks. I have seen General Dörnberg. He has very pleasing manners.

CLXIV.

TO PERTHÈS.

March, 1813.

I can quite understand, dear Perthès, your having no leisure to write to me, for we hear that the universal joy at our liberation, has been even more tumultuously expressed in Hamburgh than with us, and, in the first transports of rejoicing, one can hardly write a letter. But, when joy has survived transport—when, blended with the contemplation of those great aims, to which all who break their fetters have pledged their lives, it stimulates all the energies of your soul —then I am sure you will remember your friend also, and anticipate his desire to hear from you.

Our journal of to-day is rich in news: hasten to read it; it will tell you everything. Who could have dreamt that such days were in store for us, as we have lived through during the last few months—you, within the last month? Only let us now preach to every one—we have no need to recall it to ourselves—that an inactive joy were as despicable as it were ruinous. Neither will you, I am sure, yield to fear, because the path to the mountain-summit of freedom winds up by the edge of a precipice. We must tread it cautiously, with our eyes open; not gazing too frequently into the depths beneath, but ever looking upwards, yet not unmindful where we plant our steps. Our deliverance cannot remain an incomplete work; it cannot go back, if we, in any measure, do that to which we are summoned by every motive. . . . .

I am going to edit a weekly political newspaper here; you shall have the prospectus of it very shortly. You will also receive a few thousand copies of Arndt's classical pamphlet on "Landwehr and Landsturm." I shall write you further particulars about it soon; it is to be distributed gratis from house to house; your senate must take this in charge, and have a new impression of it struck off for distribution. You must also get it translated into Dutch; for we shall soon be

able to send it into East Friesland and farther. No house must be without a copy of this paper. To writing, and to serving as a common soldier, am I restricted *at such a time!* Fate has so ordained it.

The excellent "Word of Command" is said to be by our King himself; and it bears the impress of his fine and unsullied character. The personal qualities of our King are a consolation for much besides; I hope that foreigners may learn to appreciate him also. You are taking the best course in allying yourselves with Prussia. Farewell, dear friend, and love me.

CLXV.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, *9th April*, 1813.

Milly has already told you everything. Her calm acquiescence in my decision is touching. You know how anxious she always is on my account, but here the strength of her mind is evinced.

The expression of your love is a comfort to me; but do not give way to sadness; all is well, and will be well. It is my fixed determination to take part in the crusade; and if, in a matter of such moment, it is a relief when the decision must be partly left to fate, I have this consolation also; for it is necessary to obtain the King's permission. If, in my case, he annuls the unbecoming distinction made in favour of landowners and officials, I shall have a very simple duty to fulfil. Do not fear for my strength; it will hold out. If the King refuse his consent, I shall take it as a dispensation of Providence, and I shall have satisfied my sense of duty, and saved my honour in the eyes of my conscience. I certainly believe that I can do as much good with my newspaper as with my musket, but on this point no one has a right to judge for himself; our course is simply to take up arms, without cavilling as to the usefulness of the post

assigned us. And therefore it is my earnest wish, to enter as a musketeer into one of our excellent regiments of the line, where the privates are really as thoroughly respectable as you find it stated, from authentic sources, in my journal. I shall write to you again, as soon as anything further is settled. Dohna goes to-morrow to join the volunteer corps under his brother-in-law. Be of good courage, as we are!

CHAPTER VIII.

NIEBUHR'S RETURN TO POLITICAL LIFE.—SECOND JOURNEY TO HOLLAND. FROM APRIL, 1813, TO MAY, 1814.

Towards the end of April, Niebuhr received a royal summons to repair without delay to Dresden, where the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Russia, had already arrived. In pursuance of the treaty of Breslau, between the two sovereigns, a central council had been formed, charged with the provisional administration of the German countries reconquered from Napoleon, —the execution of treaties with the Princes of Germany respecting the troops, subsidies, and supplies, to be contributed by each,—and the appointment of government officers within the provinces under its jurisdiction. Stein, who acted as the representative of Russia, was chairman of this council; Schoen and Niebuhr were associated with him, as the representatives of Prussia. Both had been selected by Stein for the office.

Immediately on his arrival in Dresden, Niebuhr was employed to negotiate with Lord Stewart respecting the subsidies to be advanced by England, and afterwards, to draw up a commercial treaty between England and Prussia.

When the defeats of Lützen and Bautzen obliged the Allied Sovereigns to retreat to Lusatia, and afterwards to Silesia, Niebuhr followed the head-quarters, and witnessed the battle of Bautzen from the distance of a few miles.

The treaty concerning the subsidies was signed on the 14th of June, 1813, after which he remained about two months longer at head-quarters, now stationed in Reichenbach. Hardenberg offered him a temporary mission to London, but he believed that it was more advisable for the interests of Prussia that the treaty on which he was engaged should be brought to a conclusion at head-quarters, and, on his representations, Hardenberg renounced his plan.

In the middle of August, he followed the Sovereigns to Prague. Here he fell ill, and had several relapses, which obliged him to remain there till late in the autumn.

His relations with Stein had been anything but satisfactory, during these months. The latter was in a delicate position, as the representative of the Russian interests; and, appreciating the necessity of supporting the Emperor Alexander in his undertakings, as the only means through which the deliverance of Germany could be effected, he felt it right, for the time being, to keep his Prussian sympathies somewhat in the background, lest the jealousy of the Russians should be aroused, and he should be supplanted in the Emperor's confidence. Schoen and Niebuhr feared that his German patriotism was cooling, and accused him of unduly favouring the interests of Russia. This gave

rise to repeated misunderstandings, which were aggravated by the irritability and petulance of Stein, who was suffering greatly from gout, at the moment when the cares of half Europe were resting on him. Niebuhr, who was by no means of a patient temper, does not seem to have made due allowance for Stein's situation, and the result was a temporary estrangement between the two friends, who, however, at a later period, renewed their intimacy, which was thenceforward only broken by death.

In consequence of these circumstances, Niebuhr returned to Berlin in November, 1813. His joy at the deliverance of Germany was clouded by his sorrow for the misfortunes of Denmark. He and his wife were filled with anxious apprehensions respecting the fate of their friends in Holstein, for they knew that among the troops which occupied that province, there were many animated with a very different spirit, from that which had been roused in the Prussian warriors, by the struggle for their father-land.

About this time, Niebuhr, by official request, drew up a project for the constitution of Holland, which was to be submitted afterwards to a commission, for examination. It does not appear whether it was finally turned to any account, but most probably it was not, as some passages, written at the time of the Belgian revolt, express his regret that his counsels had not been adopted, when he proposed a completely separate administration for the two countries. It may seem, at first sight, inconsistent, that one who had so often expressed his contempt for "constitution-mongers"

should have attempted to draw up one himself, but it must not be overlooked, that he did so for a nation that already possessed constitutional forms.

In February, 1814, Niebuhr was sent to Holland, to negotiate further arrangements for subsidies with the English commissioners. He set off on the 21st of February, with his wife, who was in very bad health. The weather was extremely severe during their journey, and for a part of the way the roads were almost impassable. The travelling, and the living in rooms imperfectly warmed with open fires, was very injurious to Madame Niebuhr. Her obstinate cough had already awakened anxiety in her friends, but she was naturally of a hopeful disposition, never suspected the impending evil, and used to encourage her husband, when he sometimes expressed apprehensions, by saying, that she had often been worse before, and had recovered.

By the beginning of June, the business had proceeded as far as it could be carried at that time; his wife had meanwhile so far recovered that they were able to take a journey into Brabant.

On his return to Amsterdam, Niebuhr received tidings of the renewed occupation of Holstein, but this did not prevent him from undertaking his proposed journey thither. There he spent his time in the house of his aged father, who had now become both blind and lame. His friends assembled round him, and the time passed happily, and too quickly away, for it was impossible not to feel sometimes that such a meeting could never recur. Niebuhr could not hope to see his father again, and his friends saw but too clearly that Madame

Niebuhr would never be able to revisit them. She herself was still full of hope, and ready sympathy with all around her, and this seemed to blind her husband to her real danger.

On his return to Berlin, Niebuhr was requested to give the Crown Prince instruction in finance. He was thus brought frequently into contact with the young Prince, whom he inspired with a warm and lasting attachment, while the talents and amiability of his royal pupil won his affection in return.

Towards the close of 1814, Niebuhr wrote a pamphlet entitled, "The Rights of Prussia against the Court of Saxony," one of the most spirited and able productions of his pen; the object of which was to refute the libels against Prussia, industriously circulated throughout Germany by the partisans of France and Saxony. It excited great attention, and had a rapid sale. The Prussian government formally expressed their thanks to him for it, and requested him to send a hundred copies to Vienna, and to get it translated into English.

Niebuhr's domestic happiness was clouded over with mournful apprehensions. His wife's symptoms grew more and more alarming, and he could not conceal from himself, that she became weaker after each short interval of improvement. Besides these personal sorrows, he was deeply grieved by the final decision of the Congress of Vienna. The partition of Saxony appeared to him very disadvantageous for that country itself, and the cession of East Friesland to Hanover pained him exceedingly, as destroying the possibility of

Prussia's becoming a maritime power. He saw in all the terms of the convention, a prevailing desire to weaken Prussia, and by placing her in opposition to France, to sow the seeds of her dismemberment at some future period.

Napoleon's return from Elba roused him from his melancholy contemplations. Like many other Prussians, his first emotions at the intelligence were rather of joy than of sorrow. He fancied that it would produce instant union between the Allied Powers, and that the influence of Prussia would be increased by the new struggle, in which she would once more have to play a principal part.

But when Napoleon's power established itself without opposition in France, he shuddered at the prospect of the perilous conflict about to be renewed, and the consequences of a protracted war on the prosperity of the country, and the morality and education of its youth.

While oppressed by these domestic and political cares, he received tidings of the death of his father in April, 1815.

Extracts from Niebuhr's Letters from the Spring of 1813 *to May,* 1814.

CLXVI.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

DRESDEN, *3rd May,* 1813.

From my letter to my father, which you will have read at Meldorf, you will have seen that I have been summoned here. I received the order on Monday night at eleven o'clock, and the next day at noon we were in the carriage.

Göschen has undertaken the editorship of the journal for a time. Milly is writing to you about our journey. We feared we should not get accommodation here at once, as the Emperor Alexander and our King were here with their retinue; but all was right. We found room in the first hotel we stopped at, and the day before yesterday we were quartered at a private house, where we are living in style.

Negotiations with England respecting subsidies are my immediate employment. I have to act with Baron von Hardenberg and M. von Stein. I had not seen the former since my retirement from office, but his behaviour towards me is just what it used to be, and as if our connexion had never been interrupted. Stein is unequal, (perhaps he is soured by his misfortunes,) and hence it is often difficult to deal with him.

Yesterday and to-day, we have been in constant anxious expectation of a battle. Our latest positive intelligence is of the day before yesterday, and then a battle was daily expected. A cannonade was heard in this neighbourhood yesterday; we are awaiting with beating hearts the tidings which must soon arrive, unless the cannonade was a delusion, or only proceeded from an unimportant affair. We know that the French army is by no means so small as it was foolishly represented to be; and know that we have an extremely hard struggle before us. The excellence of our army gives us confidence.

As I am busy all the mornings in conferences or at my desk, we have seen little here as yet. We have been once to the Gallery.

The intelligence we have received here from Denmark makes us very uneasy. God grant, that the apparently insurmountable difficulties may admit of a solution.

Goethe had left this place before our arrival, and from the accounts we hear of his political bitterness, his sinister prophecies, and his ill-humour, I am well pleased not to have seen him *now*. I have not yet made acquaintance with any of the residents here.

It vexes one to be living in an occupied country which takes no part in the war. In Berlin, the universal activity and enthusiasm, the warlike preparations, &c., constantly inspired cheerfulness and courage. But the people are German in their hearts, of which we had many touching proofs on our way hither, in the country districts.

God be with us all! Give my love to my father and all our relations.

CLXVII.

NEUMARKT, IN SILESIA, 25*th May*, 1813.

. . . . I presume that Behrens has forwarded to you the letter which I wrote him from Liegnitz on the 16th. I shall therefore continue my account from the time when we resolved to return to Görlitz, where the administrative head-quarters had been meanwhile erected. We performed the journey from Liegnitz thither very quickly; passing through a beautiful district, full of towns, whose buildings and environs betrayed their former prosperity, which has now been almost everywhere destroyed by the wars of 1805-6. But since poverty has universally taken the place of this prosperity, and the cloth and linen manufactures find no sale, nothing but a steadfast hope of better times, can keep one from being positively depressed and saddened by the signs of former opulence. Through the greater part of this country the scenery is magnificent, and Milly and I have both said to each other, how much we should like to visit this beautiful Silesia some day with you; but this time I was much too anxious to enjoy it. Görlitz was greatly altered since our former stay there. Then, too, the long market-like main street of the town was thronged with an endless train of waggons, but they were filled with the wounded, who were being carried to the hospitals. Now, there was nothing of this kind, but the town swarmed with the troops quartered there, and the streets and squares were full of Russian equipages, round which the horses were stationed, as in a camp. With some difficulty, we found a place at an hotel

where we could put up our carriage and horses, and hired a room at the house of our former hostess, a good-natured citizen's wife. I found that nothing was lost by my absence; for the business which I had been summoned to transact—in which, however, I cannot act till others have prepared the way for me—stood exactly at the same point as before my departure from Dresden, and had rather gone backwards than forwards. I cannot now relate to you how I found an opportunity the day after my arrival to bring it, at one stroke, almost to a settlement, and by what unaccountable carelessness this opportunity was lost. We now learnt that the armies had been standing opposite to each other for some days, ready for fighting, and there could be no doubt that the French would soon attack, as they were suffering from want of provisions. The position of the allied army was not above five miles at most from Görlitz, and our situation in this town so insecure, that we could not think too soon of taking precautions for our safety. For, although a bridge of boats had been thrown across the Neisse below the town, in case of a retreat, full half the army, with the baggage, artillery, &c., would still have to take the road through the town, and over the bridge which connects it with the suburb. Upper Lusatia is a mountainous and very beautiful district, and its towns lie on the summits or slopes of hills; thus, Görlitz, properly speaking, consists, like Edinburgh, of only one long and very broad street, stretching along the ridge of a hill, that becomes so narrow and steep, as it slopes down towards the bridge, as to require great care at all times to stop the horses in descending it. It will be long before I shall be able to think of this *défilé* without a shudder. It was easy to foresee that we should remain here till a battle had taken place, and then hundreds would be wanting post-horses at once, if it were necessary to retreat. We were, therefore, obliged to secure our safety by purchasing horses, and engaging a coachman. Thus we made our arrangements, so as to await the last moment with as little danger as the position of the town allowed.

On Wednesday, 19th, the bloody and glorious engagement

of Königswartha took place on the right wing of our army. On the following day (20th) at noon, while the corps under Barclay de Tolly, which had gained this advantage in conjunction with that under General York, was still distant from the head quarters, the main army of the French made an attack upon our whole line, especially on the right wing. This attack was repulsed with great loss to them, and we maintained ourselves everywhere in the position which we had assumed at the commencement of the fight behind Bautzen. All the disadvantage of the day was on the side of the enemy, except that the disposition of our troops allowed him to take possession of some ground, which our out-posts had occupied before the beginning of the affair. We had taken cannons and made prisoners. General Kleist and his division distinguished themselves above all others. Towards evening, Barclay de Tolly came up with the army. The firing ceased when the darkness came on, but the renewal of the battle next day was inevitable: it re-commenced on the 21st at about four in the morning.* . . . Neither in this engagement did we lose a single cannon; but on the other hand, some of our badly wounded were left on the field, because the miserable avarice of the Russian soldiers as regards every sort of vehicle, had caused the removal of all the carriages and horses in the neighbourhood, far to the rear of the army. Our loss in dead and wounded was not so great in the three days together, from the 19th to the 21st, as it was in the battle of the 2nd. During the retreat next day, a brisk cannonade was kept up, but without effect. In Reichenbach, a skirmish took place with the rear-guard, in which the French cavalry, having ventured too far in advance, lost 400 prisoners. (The left wing had also captured cannons and prisoners on the 21st). On the following days, likewise, the firing was kept up on both sides, but there was no actual fighting. The sad truth is, however, that the allied army has continued its retreat from Lusatia, across the borders of Silesia. Still we are encouraged by remembering

* Here follows a description of the battle, which, however, is sufficiently known from other sources.

that a new Russian army under General Sacken has already passed through Breslau, and is advancing by forced marches to meet the retreating one; that the reserve battalions will soon arrive, and will fully repair our losses, so that in a few days the allied army is certain to be more numerous than it was before the battle of Bautzen; and that before long we may expect a diversion in our neighbourhood from Austria, although indeed a general like Napoleon will not suffer himself to be disturbed in his plans by the more remote movements of the larger Austrian army. But if he be forced (as we hope to God he will be) to come to a stand before our iron resistance, our country will still suffer terribly. However, in that case he must almost inevitably see his army broken to pieces. In this hope, though with mournful hearts, we have travelled to Breslau, where I shall finish this letter, uncertain whither I shall next be summoned.

On Thursday, the firing sounded very near and loud, but we listened to it with great hope, because we had learnt in the morning the victory of the day before: when, on Friday, the sound drew nearer, and became frightfully distinct and violent in the afternoon, we grew very anxious. Stein then advised us to depart. We made our preparations; the carriage was loaded; but we did not like to leave until we had some positive intelligence. Till past eleven at night, I went about from one acquaintance to another, to try if I could learn anything, but all the accounts I heard were vague and undecided. Still I could guess from them that a retreat was resolved on. Many Russian equipages had left already during the afternoon; and towards night, thick rows of waggons began to defile through the town. We, with some of our friends, had settled that if any decisive intelligence arrived, we were to be called at any hour of the night. About midnight we laid down in our clothes. It had not struck one, when they shouted under our windows that every one was leaving, and we had no wish to linger. The evening before, the coachman we had engaged, frightened at the idea of wandering, Heaven knows how far, from his native town, had taken his departure, and we should have been in most

terrible perplexity if our own servant had not known how to drive. One of our horses was sick; however we started, and got through the close ranks of the waggons in the dark without accident, and through the narrow pass I have described above, where we were obliged to drive up close against the side of the street to pass Stadion's equipage. We have seen war in a horrible form; we have passed through bands of pillagers, and crowds of peasants who had flocked together to defend themselves from being plundered. Our good star has not forsaken us. I must conclude in order to send this letter by post.

CLXVIII.

REICHENBACH, 16*th June*, 1813.

We have at last received two letters from you, which have been sent about from place to place. . . .

I think, that while we were still in Dresden, I mentioned to you, that the change in my residence and society was anything but cheering. At Berlin, the consciousness of the excellent spirit which animated the nation was ever present to us; and yet we were sufficiently removed from the sight of all that is saddening in the actual details of the war. We lived with all the energies of our souls and hearts in action, and each one derived his belief in the immeasurable energy of the nation, from his own inward consciousness. It was this which made us so full of confidence. In Dresden, we were separated from the nation, and its most excellent part, the army, and transported into a circle of fashionable people who were strangers to us, at least there were only a few of our public men among them. Here we saw as exclusively what was commonplace, as at home what was beautiful and good. The few eminent men were, however, among my friends.—And of well-digested plans, of creative ideas, of enthusiasm or love, I saw no trace.

It is far from enough, to say that our troops have fought with unexampled heroism; to feel as high a respect for them as they deserve, it must not only be remembered, that they were placed at the absolute command of foreign generals,

who have not maintained their previous reputation, and thus have become the victims of their mistakes and unskilfulness; but also that their own superior officers were deficient in experience and sagacity. And as regards the inferior officers, the best of them were often wanting either in experience or cool blood; they have lavished away their lives. But in spite of all this, our comparatively small army, at all times only partially supported by our allies, (it is but just to say, however, that whenever Russian divisions have come to an actual engagement, they have fought extremely well, only not with enthusiasm,) and opposed to an immensely superior force, has achieved things which would have been held impossible, because each man has fought, as if all depended upon himself alone. Battalions, nearly the whole of whose officers have been shot off or wounded, have fought on with the greatest order. In addition to this, the patience of our troops, their quiet resignation when they have seen the fruits of their exploits surrendered without a cause, their morality, their discipline,—not a single instance of excess is named, not one soldier has pillaged on the retreat,—is so elevating, that one cannot but feel a true reverence for such an army. God knows what will be the fate of Germany and ourselves. If, however, what might be the means of a most glorious deliverance should, through the fault of others, remain ineffectual, the freedom of Germany will close with a glory for Prussia, which will throw Frederick's military greatness into the shade. Would the army be as pure if we had him with us now? I scarcely think so, and yet it might be so, and then we could defy once more the united power of the whole world.

By the unanimous verdict of the army itself, Colonel Von Grollman is one of the first officers it contains, and it shows the spirit which animates our officers, that lieutenant-generals of advanced age, have declared that they would willingly obey him, if the King would entrust him with the command. He and I have long known each other by name, and cherished a mutual respect and affection, but I only became personally acquainted with him three days ago, and I have never before

seen such a man. York and Kleist are most noble-minded men, who think of nothing but the general welfare.

On the 2nd of May, the French only took a single unwounded Prussian prisoner. In all partial engagements, we, and the Russians also, are certain of victory.

I write unconnectedly to you, because I can only write about the surface of things, and that is of immense extent; if I dared to go to the bottom, I could say all in a few words.

I saw the King at Breslau; he was very gracious, and said it gave him much pleasure to see me again in his service. But I shall soon have arranged the business, for which I was summoned, because there was no one else who understood the matter besides myself; and will there be anything further thought of afterwards? I do not wish for anything on my own account; that I can say with a safe conscience.

Now I must tell you a little about ourselves. I returned from Schweidnitz the day after I had written to you, and brought the intelligence that a truce had been concluded for twelve hours, and that a longer one was being negotiated.* Our pain on hearing this I will not describe to you. There is much to be urged both for, and against, an armistice; but only let people ask themselves, without descending to all the details, whether a longer armistice *with such* an enemy *can* be a good thing. It alleviates our apprehensions respecting it, that all we do is in conjunction with Austria, and in accordance with our good understanding with that power; and besides, that our preparation for war will be carried on with all possible zeal and activity. It is a guarantee that our government are in earnest, that the day before yesterday, they signed a treaty of alliance with England, stipulating for subsidies, which are to furnish the means of paying the expenses of the war. The consciousness that I have helped to further this work gives me great joy.

We came hither on the 6th June from Frankenstein. This little town has been quite swarming with human beings for the last ten days. We arrived here some hours before the

* The armistice of Pleswitz, concluded for six weeks from June 4th.

great body, and hence were able to obtain a very good room in an hotel, which we much prefer to being quartered in a private house. These ten days have been spent in bringing about the treaty, in which verbal negotiations did more than written papers. It is beginning to grow a little quieter here now; the people are dispersing in various directions. The Emperor Alexander has set off for Bohemia to-day, to have a meeting with his sister. Many think that he will have an interview with the Emperor of Austria; that is hardly probable. . . . .

CLXIX.

TO THE PRINCESS LOUISA.

REICHENBACH, *July 12th.*

Your Royal Highness will be better acquainted than I am with the melancholy situation of our country—discontented, disappointed, and abandoned to ruin, as it seems, by shallow egotists, who doubtless, in their hearts, have despised, from the first, the tokens of inspiration and heroic virtue given by our country, and who will probably end by making these very virtues a ground of accusation against it, and a reason of state for sacrificing and annihilating a nation, because it cannot remain immovable and without feeling like a slave, up to the moment when it may please the cabinet to let it loose against those, who stand in the way of some temporary advantage. We were very credulous, so far as we placed our trust in men; yet who can repent the wishes that he has cherished?—wishes which might serve as a guide to the government, would they receive counsel.

It is possible that our nation may sink into a condition far beneath its state previous to the war; but no nation has ever done or deserved more to reconquer freedom and happiness. We cannot but feel, that it possesses within itself means of victory which far surpassed even the possible dreams of enthusiasts; and, if we are vanquished, that triumph might have been secured by our own resources alone, had our rulers understood how to make use of them; nay, perhaps, it would have been enough to ensure success,

had we got rid of the men, at whose disposal they have been placed through mistaken trust and complaisance. No one ought to feel more than Stein, the deep sadness which is inspired by the view of our misfortunes; he, however, strives apparently to escape from it, by giving way to fits of ill-temper and even passion, with all who suffer from it as he ought to suffer. In fact, hardly a shadow is left of the old ties which once bound me to him; we cannot carry on a connected conversation; we must avoid the topics which most deserve our attention, if I do not wish to draw on myself attacks, which are always unreasonable, and would be unendurable to any one who had not formerly loved him. What makes my relation towards him most embarrassing is, that my path would be much clearer if I allowed matters to come to a complete breach. If one does but make a remark, he instantly contradicts it, and always in a very unsuitable manner, as though it were an absolute absurdity.

I could never have believed, that a time would come when I should go to see him, and be glad not to find him at home. Yet I have still so much tenderness for him left, that I am always touched, when I find him calm and open to a conversation in the least resembling those of the good old times, and I shall bear with him to the end, because fate has inflicted wounds upon his heart which he seeks to hide even from himself; and it is precisely this discord in his inner nature which renders him unendurable to others. For the rest, he has changed his opinions of many men and things; at Dresden, he wrote me an insulting note, because I ventured to doubt the honesty of an individual, of whom he now speaks with the greatest contempt. I should not have written all this to your Royal Highness, had I been obliged to entrust this letter to the post, which is very insecure. For the only branch of government carried on with zeal by our present Minister* is the strict watch kept on all persons who are induced to despise him, for abandoning us to the consequences of his own incapacity and indolence, and the crimes of the miserable creatures with whom he has surrounded himself.

* Hardenberg.

CLXX.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

PRAGUE, *7th October*, 1813.

. . . . We were more than two months at Reichenbach. The little town was crowded with human beings. The executive, ambassadors, the administration of the army, and a swarm of officers (mostly Russians) filled it to overflowing. The market-place was always heaped with baggage-waggons, beside which the Cossacks bivouacked. There was a continual bustle and noise, and yet, being a time of truce, none of the exciting activity of war.

. . . . I return to the account of our stay at Reichenbach. The armistice and congress of Prague had a disheartening and paralysing effect upon the minds of all. I was happily of the number of those, who (with the exception of a few moments, when appearances were so unfavourable that they irresistibly led us astray,) persevered in believing, that the pressure of circumstances would bring about a result, which many of those at the head of affairs would rather not have seen; and therefore I was not in bad spirits. But it is a miserable condition when you are impelled by every motive to concentrate all your faculties on the consideration of a single point, and yet can perceive nothing distinctly. It is certain that the Russian cabinet, and a party in their army, were inclined to peace;* but the Emperor Alexander was most inflexible, and we owe him many thanks for it. Among ourselves, the peace party was extremely small, and all its activity was confined to pitiful intrigues; the nation, as well as the army, cried loudly for perseverance; the Austrians had advanced far enough, and constantly became more deeply implicated with us; though this much is certain, that their ultimatum would have proved to be none at all, if the Emperor Napoleon would have made the smallest concession.

It was exactly on this blind arrogant obstinacy that I built my hopes, and on Fate, which is determined to be

* See Stein's Leben, Book VI., sec. 4. The court, including the Empress Mother and several of the generals, wanted to force Alexander into making peace.

avenged on him. Nevertheless, when the congress assembled, and so many things came to light, I had no lack of anxieties and fears. We had a numerous circle of society. General Stewart, the English envoy at our court, with whom I had more particularly to negotiate the treaty of alliance and the subsidies, has become my friend in the true sense of the word. . . . . Prince Radziwill visited us from time to time. Through him I became acquainted with the young Prince Czartorinsky; and found him to be a most intellectual and highly-cultivated man, filled with sorrow for the fate of his country. A Saxon, Colonel Von Carlowitz, who came to us with General Thieleman, had already pleased me much in Dresden, and I now found his society very agreeable; particularly as he was the only person with whom I could converse on matters unconnected with the present moment, since he possessed a great amount of historical information. Solly was about half the time there. An English Colonel Campbell and I struck up a warm friendship. I was on a very friendly footing with several other Englishmen. Ompteda, the Hanoverian ambassador (cousin to the Countess Münster) pleased us much by his warm-hearted honesty. The Russian ambassador, Alopæus, is a polished and sagacious man of the world. Arndt we saw but seldom; but he is an honest soul, and full of life and warmth. . . . . A great number of officers visited us. While there I became more intimate with our excellent Colonel Grollman, and he exceeded my expectations, which were not slight. He would be the general for Germany. I think he is also attached to me. I love him so that my heart beats whenever I think of him. . . . . M. Von Stein I saw almost daily.

They thought of sending me to England; but under circumstances in which I could do little good. I succeeded in convincing Baron Hardenberg that the idea was ill-advised, and the expense unnecessary. He afterwards offered to send me formally as envoy extraordinary, and I expressed my readiness to accept such a mission, but submitted it to his consideration, whether the advantage would be great enough to be worth the expense. (My position there would in other respects be more agreeable than that of any other

ambassador, because I am personally acquainted with so many men of note.) On my representations, I at length received the reply that Baron Hardenberg thought the mission superfluous for the present. When the conclusion of the armistice was announced, and the head-quarters were removed to Bohemia, we followed also. I staid two days in Landeck to arrange business with Hardenberg and Stewart. On the 21st we came on to this place.*

If you admired the spirit with which our nation took up arms, your admiration must be heightened now, when you see this spirit living on with undiminished vigour, amid distress, innumerable difficulties, and many disheartening circumstances. Our troops fought like lions. The newly-formed battalions of militia, many of which had scarcely any officers who had seen service, fought like veteran regiments, only with too much fury. . . . . A nation containing less than 5,000,000, impoverished, torn by internal convulsions for the last seven years, has sent more than 250,000 men into the field with *comparatively* slight assistance from foreign powers; and when has an army ever fought with more heroic valour for their own and the general freedom!

This is acknowledged very warmly here; the brotherly affection and kindness which the inhabitants have shown to the wounded, is probably without a parallel. It is above all praise. The friendship between Prussia and Austria has been restored on a stable foundation, and we may securely trust that the government, as well as the nation, are sincerely desirous of promoting our interests. Austria entered into the war with reluctance, but will unite faithfully and perseveringly with us, in carrying it to a happy conclusion. . . . .

CLXXI.

TO PERTHÈS.

FRANKFORT ON THE ODER, *December*, 1813.

. . . . You will, no doubt, easily obtain a promise, guaranteeing the independence of your towns; I think that is among

* Here follows an account of an illness which he had in Prague, and a summary of the events of the war.

the settled points. I should have been much surprised if you had obtained more, for it appears that the decision of the positive changes to be made, is to be left to some more distant time.

Your picture of the misfortunes of Hamburgh is terrible, and yet I believe it is not exaggerated in a single feature. Only do not imagine that Hamburgh stands alone in its misery; the condition of Stettin, Dantzic, for example, not to speak of the Spanish towns, is still worse. And who can help it? And what claim can a single city make, to receive assistance from all the rest,—from those who have suffered quite as much, and at the same time (you will neither deny it nor misconstrue me) have done infinitely more? With us here in Prussia, likewise, nine-tenths of the landowners, both in town and country, are ruined, and yet they must still go on paying contributions—it cannot be otherwise—till they are cut down to the bone. Many, many thousands of our youths, of our men, are shedding their blood, are pining away their lives in hospitals, or in want and wretchedness; what have the Hanse Towns done? I do not reproach them for the passive surrender of the city, but I certainly see in it nothing heroic, nothing that lays other states under a moral obligation to make sacrifices in their behalf. . . . .

It is a terrible thing that a city should be ruined for two generations: but how long did Magdeburg lie in ruins and ashes? Is it often that we can give help where we would? Must we not rather be resigned to circumstances? You have enjoyed the advantages of independence: the helplessness of a city, which stands alone as a state, is inseparable from them. In a great state, all may unite to raise up a single ruined city. It has, as such, no national debt. For a single city to have a large national debt, is to have a monster devouring its vitals. Even Holland, although it is little more than an assemblage of towns, can survive a bankruptcy: and perhaps it will be a benefit to the nation. The experiment has been made once already, since the war of 1672, by the permanent reduction of one and a half per cent in the dividends. With you the case is certainly somewhat

different; but you must not fold your hands and say that it is once for all impossible that any of you should live to see the restoration of your old prosperity. . . . .

My poor, poor Holstein! O that you could hasten back, and protect my relations! There seems to be a deliberate intention to turn that land into a desert, because every heart in it is with Germany. My blood boils at this atrocity,—which raises the indignation of our real allies and the English,—at this arbitrary move to the north, from which none but the French can reap any advantage. That the Cossacks should commit ravages, is a matter of course; but do you really expect it of the Hanseatic soldiers, that they, like all other newly-formed troops, would choose to "indemnify" themselves in this manner? The real Prussians among Lützow's regiments will not wish to indemnify themselves by outrage and cruelty. A Prussian never plunders, even in an enemy's country; Holstein is not an enemy to any German. Are these your Hanseatic citizens, towards whom your heart overflows with affection! If they are really such as you say, if sorrow works thus upon them, so differently from its effect upon the Prussians, let them go to the devil! The French custom-house officers, and all Davoust's crew were also a set of hungry wretches, and wanted to indemnify themselves. I can make sacrifices too, but it does exasperate me, to see all that I love best given up to bands of marauders without any object. God would give me strength, if necessary, to bombard a town that contained my dearest friends, but to see an innocent country abandoned to pillage, to see people, who are among the noblest of their times, reduced to misery, by an unprincipled policy and rapacity,—I cry to Heaven for vengeance on it!

CLXXII.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, 21*st December*, 1813.

With what anguished hearts we have looked forward to your letter, you will have seen from the one I wrote you on Saturday. The most fearful images rose up and scared away

our sleep, and on waking they returned with all their painful reality. They mingled themselves with our dreams; and in the absence of intelligence, one even transforms the shapes of fancy into data, which heighten one's vague terror. Had you been visited by Prussian troops of the line, we should have been free from apprehensions for your personal safety; but those who came to Holstein from us, were only free corps, raw recruits and strangers, or the dregs of the capital, and the rest were all foreigners, and for the most part such as had reckoned upon booty. And now, letters were received here from the army, giving an account of the devastation of the country; and these were succeeded by the bulletin which left no doubt that Tettenborn had gone to Husum, and little, of his having taken the route through Meldorf.

God be praised, that our apprehensions on *your* account are, to a certain extent, allayed, by learning that the actual horrors of war are no longer probable in the towns; but we are still looking forward with undiminished terror to the probable fate of Husum and Meldorf.

We are assured here, that the conclusion of the peace with Denmark may be regarded as certain, and I have long felt satisfied that it would be brought to pass. This could be foreseen; and, therefore, I was filled with sorrowful indignation by the conviction that Holstein would be made to suffer, solely as a means of compelling the cession of Norway, and would be doubly punished in order to revenge the limitation of the claims brought about by the intervention.

Thus, though our fears for you may be calmed, by finding that you have weathered the storm without sustaining much outward injury, I shall still mourn over the poor country, whose prosperity has been fruitlessly destroyed, like some unhappy victim, whose fate it has been to experience only those sorrows which humiliate and enfeeble, and has had no opportunity to make those sacrifices, by which individuals and nations are purified and exalted.

Of all the letters you have written since the beginning of July, we have only received one, dated the beginning of October; not even the one sent through Count Bombelles.

None of the letters which Count Dohna sent to the head quarters with his own despatches, have reached me. Owing to this uncertainty, I hardly know what to tell you of the months that have passed since our correspondence was interrupted, without repeating what you already know.

When you last saw Berlin, an avalanche was impending over us, whose crushing fall we were expecting from month to month. While it hung over us, it deprived us of air and sun; we could do nothing but resign ourselves to what appeared to human eyes, our unalterable fate, as men in similar periods of the world had been forced to do, and confine ourselves to the little sphere we could still call our own, till imperious Destiny should step in. It was certainly, indeed, at that time permitted to us to forget the outer world of the present, and to bury ourselves in pleasant studies, and by this distraction of our thoughts, to live as happily as was possible under such circumstances. How all is changed around us now! Never have good will and good ideas ripened so universally into good deeds as with our people. He who had beforehand declared what ought to be done when the time of trial should come, did it now himself (with very few exceptions), and to the fullest extent. The behaviour of the women, too, is admirable. There are hundreds, who not only renounce every pleasure, but even a close attention to their households, in order to superintend the hospitals, to cook, to tend the sick, to mend their linen, to procure money and other necessaries, to look after the hired nurses, and keep them up to their duty. Many have already fallen victims to typhus fever. The men can scarcely interfere with the regular course of these occupations, which have assumed quite an organised character.

All that is the spontaneous expression of the national mind, is elevating. The recruits leave their homes with shouts of rejoicing; practise the exercise together out of the hours for training, that they may be able to join the army so much the sooner. And this is not done that they may lead a merry life of excess; the soldier hungers when his host can give him nothing rather than use violence; he gives his

cloak to his captive when he is shivering himself. One cannot speak of these things without emotion, without saying to oneself that these people are better than we should be in their place. Our guards are as modest in their requirements as a regiment of militia, and yet they are the finest and bravest troops in the world. The officers are patterns to their soldiers. And all the people of North Germany might be like these, if they could be united, and brought to a common recognition of each other's excellence by seeing it in action. The core is sound here; what is wrong on the outside will be remedied in time from within. The King respects the nation. I am delighted with the Crown Prince. His noble poetical nature is gradually beginning to be recognised by some. He has extraordinary depth of feeling; and he preserves his individuality of character, sometimes without effort, sometimes consciously, among people who do not understand him, and are always blaming him. There is something very uncommon about him; the King calls his strongest feelings into play. He gives promise of great days for Prussia and for Germany,—of the fulfilment of all that is yet wanting.

CLXXIII.

BERLIN, *25th January*, 1814.

. . . . The conditions of the treaty of peace suggest more thoughts than can be committed to paper. The cession of Swedish Pomerania will have scarcely been expected by any: the submissiveness of Denmark was to be anticipated. The very first movement against Holstein grieved me so much, because I foresaw how the matter would end; how the energies of the country would be exhausted without any prospect of corresponding good results. The Allies could only permit the Danish war as an episode, and everything betrays a determination to avoid any crisis by which matters would be brought to a settlement, as if they intentionally husbanded materials for future wars.

With what different feelings from those which filled our minds during the summer, is our attention now directed to

the theatre of war? We may now dare to cherish brilliant hopes; and even if, here and there, the tide of our good fortune should turn, we need fear nothing that can affect the decision of our fate. I belong to the small number of those who do not seriously build castles in the air about the advance of the allied armies to Paris: I cannot yet feel sure that Napoleon is sufficiently weakened for me to desire it; for if it is to be accomplished merely as a feat of arms, and were not absolutely decisive, it would be most undesirable. The peace is universally believed to be very near; but it can scarcely be so, if the restoration of the frontiers, as they existed before the revolution, be insisted on. We seem to be dreaming when we now take up the maps we used one-and-twenty years ago. I wish that those in whose hands the decision lies, may remember that it is no dream, but that they really have the power in their own hands, as much as our enemies had sixteen months ago. In France, the nation is so weary that the Allies are received as friends. In Savoy, where the custom-house officers have fled, when the people recovered their independence, they shouted viva! not to their old Sovereign, but to our King.

We are reading Madame de Staël's work on Germany: we have only just got the first two volumes. These are very unequal in value; the second, which treats of the German drama, and contains translations of several long passages, &c., is very unsatisfactory; and makes most of the chapters in the first, seem all the more excellent by comparison. The chapters on Goethe, North Germany, and Vienna are extremely good, and even the great mistakes and omissions in some of her accounts prove that the book cannot have been written by Schlegel under her name. He cannot even have seen it before it was printed. She speaks of Goethe with profound respect, and pourtrays him with the most delicate accuracy, which does wonderful honour to her sagacity. It is evident that she has guessed him, for all her translations show that she does not half understand the words of his poems. Her attempt to render them into prose (she even tries at the Bride of Corinth) is an utter failure.

St. followed the head quarters as far as Freyburg, and has now arrived here. I hear from him that, a month ago, they talked in the most decided manner of sending me as a commissioner to Holland; he had been assured that the despatches were to be sent off to me without delay, and therefore supposed me to be in Amsterdam. I have not heard even a word on the subject. Probably, as soon as I have made arrangements for working regularly again at my newspaper, I shall be called away on a sudden. Since my return, I have only written single articles in it; Arnim has been the editor up to this time, but it is now going into other hands.

Milly is busy to-day making bandages for the hospital, and it affects her weak eyes so much that she cannot write. She sends her best love, and will write to you soon.

CLXXIV.

AMSTERDAM, 10*th March*, 1814.

. . . . Our present visit to Amsterdam is very unlike our former residence here six years ago, when the greater part of my time passed in leisure and deep repose, which were extremely beneficial to me. I am now as full of business and engagements, as I ever was in my life; but I hope to have the satisfaction of rendering important services, which will give me a right to return, when the world is once more quiet, to that literary leisure in which, in ordinary times, I fulfil the peculiar vocation of my life. My position here is as agreeable as possible. My English fellow-commissioner, a Chevalier Bergman, is a very polished and clever man, who thoroughly understands the subject; we are already very good friends, and treat each other like fellow-countrymen. Hence my society naturally consists, for the most part, of Englishmen, who treat me with great confidence and cordiality. Their mode of life is certainly something new to me. The day before yesterday, I came home about midnight, from a dinner party where we had sat at table till eleven o'clock.

On our way hither, we had the sorrow of learning all that had passed in Champagne from the 10th to the 26th.* Our first intelligence was drawn from the French statements respecting England, published in the Dutch newspapers; our next from the account of an Austrian, according to which our armies sustained little less than total defeat, and their retreat was to be continued across the frontiers, and the Rhine; but it was much to be feared, that only a small part of the army would come out of the struggle in good condition. This depressed me terribly. It is certain, too, that it would have come to this, but for the heroic constancy of Blucher's troops. Thank God, the former position of the conflicting powers seems now to be restored. We do not know a syllable respecting our friends in the army, and the battles have been so murderous, that some mournful tidings must be awaiting us. Neither can we shut our eyes to the fact, that the difficulties are greater now, than they would have been a month ago, if Blucher had not been left in the lurch. It has not been Wrede's fault; may God reward him for it! The Russians, too, have always done their duty bravely and honestly. Now, when the Dutch nation is called on to display other virtues than those of the passive and limited kind, which won my admiration six years ago, it certainly does not appear in a favourable point of view, especially to us who have acquired, from what we have witnessed, a standard of virtue, such as was unknown at that time. Heroism is utterly absent; no one will even serve in the army, who is not compelled by poverty to sell his life for the sake of the bounty. It is universally permitted to send substitutes even for the militia, which is not the case with us. The minds of all are simply bent upon the restoration of commerce and trade, and they rely partly on the enlisted soldiers,†

* The successive defeats of Blucher's and the Grand Allied army at Champaubont, Montmirail, Vauchamps, Nangis, and Montereau.

† The term "enlisted" (geworben) has a significance in German which it has not in English, owing to the circumstance, that in Germany all are obliged to serve in the army as they are drawn, no substitutes being permitted, so that the average character of the troops is equal to the average character of

partly on foreign troops, for the completion of their deliverance, and the establishment of their independence. On the Lower Rhine, they have a very droll caricature, in which Dutchmen are represented as sitting, with their tea-cups and pipes, in a carriage, drawn by Prussians, Russians, and English, with the words, "Zoo gaat het wel."* Unfortunately it is but too correct. Thus, too, it is really saddening to see their perfect indifference about the constitution, which is to be settled by an Assembly of Notables, who meet a fortnight hence. There is not even the least curiosity as to the tenor of the fundamental laws, which are not known by the public as yet, and therefore I am completely ignorant of the spirit in which they are conceived. If they confer a tolerable amount of freedom, it will be a liberal present on the part of the sovereign, to which he has not been in the least compelled by the public voice.

CLXXV.

AMSTERDAM, *9th April*, 1814.

. . . . May we meet you *all* again with joy! The *when* of this wished-for time we are, indeed, far from being able to fix. It is possible, that I may be able to leave, as soon as the war is ended, at least within a short time after; on the other hand, we may have to stay here for a considerable period longer; it is, indeed, possible, too, that my destination may be changed. But, in fact, when will the war be quite at an end? The conquest of Paris is a very great achievement; the proclamation of Louis XVIII. is also full of significance; and it is possible that a large part of France, where no restraining military force is present, may soon declare for the termination of the revolution by a return to the old dynasty. The reasons are nearly equal for and against the probability of submission on the part of the troops, and especially of the generals. If the snowball begin to roll anywhere, it may

the nation: soldiers who enter the army simply for the pay, like so many day-labourers, are looked down upon in Germany, where the term geworben always implies a touch of contempt.

* So goes it well.

quickly become an avalanche. But probably this is impossible till there has been a victory over Buonaparte, and his army is scattered. Whether he has only from forty to fifty thousand men, or more, is not of much consequence: it is certain that he cannot possibly be strong enough to attack the allied armies with success. But will he do it, notwithstanding, in desperation? Or will he make forced marches to his armies in the south, unite them, and attempt to revenge himself on the provinces which have really declared against him with enthusiasm? In former times, when his military eye was so piercing, that one could never doubt of his taking, on the whole, the right course, I should not hesitate in assuming that he would adopt the latter decision. I still expect that he will do so, because the alternative of choice, which has led him into the greatest faults ever since the Russian campaign, both on the Elbe and now on the Marne, is really no longer open to him. His march from Arcis to St. Dizier, on the 22nd of last month, is a mistake only comparable to that of General Mack. The oscillating movements to which he was compelled, the necessity of regulating his proceedings by those of the enemy, had evidently paralysed all the powers of his mind, so that he committed the most obvious blunders. Now he has no longer a choice, and if he attempt to advance towards Paris, it will be plain that God has again smitten him with blindness. But if any stand by him to the last, there will be a fearful combat to sustain with the infuriated tiger, when nothing but death is before his eyes. . . . .

Is the restoration of the Bourbons desirable? As the only possible means of terminating that political system of France, which has desolated the whole of Europe, I think it is. Some sort of constitution must, at any rate, be established. And besides, where a party shows such energy as was displayed at Bordeaux, for instance, and formerly in La Vendée, it becomes the party of freedom. Forms are nothing; the spirit is everything. . . . .

CLXXVI.

AMSTERDAM, 19*th April*, 1814.

. . . . . After this account of what more immediately concerns ourselves, I can speak to you of nothing but the extraordinary crisis, whose speedy termination has certainly taken every one by surprise. No one could have expected that Buonaparte would have displayed such pusillanimity; that he would have been as abject in adversity, as he was arrogant, so long as there remained a gleam of prosperity. As little could any one have anticipated, that the soldiers would follow the example of defection, set them by an assembly, which they had always regarded with contempt. Whether it was desirable that things should be brought so very rapidly to a crisis, or whether a slower, and more thorough, process of fermentation would not have been more wholesome, experience will most likely teach us in a short time. Many impure elements might have been eliminated, if the decision had taken place in the southern departments. As it is, all the persons, who were connected with the administration under Buonaparte, remain in office, and we must not, because he has fallen, impute to him alone all the countless crimes of the past government. Bourrienne is high in office; so is Beugnot. That Talleyrand should stand at the head of affairs, no one can blame; for extraordinary talents, and an understanding which throws all the rest of his fellow countrymen into the shade, give him a claim to this rank. The new constitution is a very sensible production; though the care which the senators have taken for themselves, is about the greatest piece of effrontery I have ever seen. It will probably afford the French all the freedom of which they are capable at present; and, therefore, I only pass censure with hesitation, even where some essential things seem to have been omitted. All depends now upon whether it is carried out in earnest. If so, we may congratulate Europe on the establishment of civil liberty on a practicable and durable basis, in the centre of the Continent, midway between the senseless anarchy of the Spanish constitution, and the

absolute monarchy, which has been introduced here in Holland, under forms which, at first sight, convey the impression that constitutional freedom really exists.

I am not quite easy, however, about the conditions of the peace; not quite satisfied that France will be everywhere reduced to the boundaries of 1789,—boundaries which I should rejoice to see further narrowed by the restoration of Alsace and Lorraine. It has been suggested, that more may be done than to guarantee the old boundaries, and this is always ringing in my ears; then other questions come up about the distribution of the conquered countries; for ourselves, I desire above all things a compact empire in North Germany, as far as it is practicable. I saw last summer, what a world-wide difference there is between Silesia and Bohemia; a difference which certainly did not exist to such an extent, before the former became Prussian territory. And the inhabitants of Westphalia and the Lower Rhine are much more similar to ourselves than those of Silesia. A remarkable age is still before us; the world will not sink back into its old insipidity and sluggishness again for the rest of our lifetime, and the foundation may be laid for better times.

It would be a severe sacrifice to me, to remain long here —long away from Berlin. We are not at all pleased with the state of feeling here. There was a short fit of noble enthusiasm in the middle of November; some individuals displayed a fine spirit; but when the few days of excitement were over, the attention of all was absorbed in the enjoyment of the advantages gained. The call of honour found deaf ears, or, rather, it appeared to them a folly. They are now pursuing their wonted avocations, and exhibit the same besotted avarice, and love of ostentation as ever; but in times of universal servitude it was less repulsive.

CLXXVII.

30th April, 1814.

. . . . A young officer, a special favourite of mine, sent me a noble letter after the battle of Laons. Whether he, or any other of my friends in the army, have survived the late bloody engagements, I am utterly ignorant. He is one of nine sons of an old superannuated general; five of them have been officers already, two are still boys, and also destined for the army. Of the seven elder sons, one fell so early as 1807, at Colberg; a second last autumn at Culm; the third, who had been wounded before in Courland, died of his wounds at Dresden; the fourth, my young friend, received a shot in the temples at Lützen, which has much impaired his sight and hearing on that side; the fifth had his arm shot off at Leipzic. Only one was still unwounded, when the seventh joined the army, last new year's day. My favourite was already in the army in 1807; he left it after the peace, learnt Latin, went to college, became an able jurist, and was afterwards companion to a rich young man, for our nobility have ceased to think such a career degrading. Our young noblemen study as hard as others at the gymnasia and universities, particularly since 1807. May God preserve to us all the good we have gained from our misfortunes! When the war broke out, he became an officer again, and is an excellent one. He tells me that, owing to the great privations our troops had to suffer, their hatred of the French at last prevailed over the humanity which the officers preached to them, and which they had long practised. They were exasperated by the cruelty of the French, who attacked single individuals, murdered the wounded, &c. Our troops had long known that the French would give no provisions even when they could, and had long suffered in patience; but when the Russians pillaged, the hidden stores came to light, which had served the French army in their eternal marches and countermarches, while our people were put off with words, and went hungry. Thus they began to help themselves, and from taking, came to plundering, of which, up to that time

there had not been a single instance among our men, during the whole war. He tells me, he could not sleep for grief. Even then, there was still a world-wide difference between the Prussians and the rest of the allied troops; for it must be confessed, that France has suffered a terrible retribution. After the victory of Laons, the field preachers took for their text, "What will it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" and exhorted the men to return to the patience and honesty they had shown till lately. The brave fellows wept bitterly, and promised with a loud voice to do so. On this, General York stepped forward, reminded them of the sacredness of their vow; said he well knew what sufferings and privations they had to bear, but he too, was not on a bed of roses; he had to lie awake with care while they slept; he had always loved them as children,—they had been such good children; but for some time past they had given him much sorrow. In this battle they had proved themselves again as *brave* as ever; they ought to be as *good* as they were brave. After this he ordered one man to step forward from each company, spoke to them singly, and took their hand upon it, that they would suffer anything rather than be guilty of any excesses. The narrative of my young friend is as touching, as these anecdotes are beautiful, and certainly unparalleled since the days of Gustavus Adolphus. I have given Stolberg's son, who has been sent to our army, a letter of recommendation to this officer. If the present spirit lasts, every father would do well to send his son to the army in case of a new war. . . . .

I cannot persuade myself, that they have reached the goal in France, and that the Bourbons will now sit quietly on the throne, which is what people call governing. If they are to fulfil their promises, and the hopes which the agriculturists and citizens entertain of repairing their losses, they must lower their receipts to a third of those which Buonaparte extorted, during the latter years of his reign, from a population, half as large again as that of old France, and then they will not be able to satisfy the demands of all those who have been paid, not only out of these collective revenues, but at

the cost of half Europe. The interests of Buonaparte and of the soldiers were essentially the same; only that for the latter, the extremely unpleasant chance of being shot dead, or maimed for life, was superadded. But this could not be helped; and even if his soldiers murmured, they knew very well that it could not be otherwise without renouncing all that they liked best—revelling at other people's expense, extortion, stealing and growing rich, tyranny, ostentation, and idleness. If, therefore, you have any wish that France should receive a little more chastisement, and that the Bourbons should not be immoderately favoured by undeserved and unexpected good fortune, there is a very tolerable prospect of the fulfilment of your desires.

CLXXVIII.

AMSTERDAM, 17*th May*, 1814.

. . . . Milly fancied herself almost well again when she began to write, but unhappily the cold wintry weather has disagreed with her, and a walk that she took has brought on a relapse. . . . . She sees absolutely no one here, beyond those who come to me on business, and the number of such is not large; neither am I much tempted to extend the circle of my acquaintance. I am not at all comfortable here at present; the people have too little sympathy with us Germans in what lies nearest to our hearts, and the manner in which this nation has stood the hour of trial necessarily influences our feelings towards them. You can have no idea of the universal want of energy. Long subjection has stimulated selfishness to the utmost extent. With many, their chief fear is lest England should insist upon the abolition of the slave-trade by all other states; she herself having discontinued it for the last seven years. "You see," said a planter to me, "it is the same with our negroes in Guiana, as it is with sugar-boilers, glass-workers, &c.—they never grow old at their work. They cannot stand it long. And, besides, we only keep two women to five men. My God! at this rate, all the most beautiful countries, where so

many thousand hogsheads of sugar might be produced, would be left a desert; and even the old plantations would go to ruin! And if Spain can no longer import negroes, what will become of the mines, which can only be worked by them. Is the gold to stay in the earth?" . . . .

CLXXIX.

AMSTERDAM, *28th May*, 1814.

. . . . The French writers are no longer brilliant, but as superficial as ever. Formerly, they were sometimes profound through their very ingenuity; now, their ignorance and shallowness stand unveiled before the reader. It is very remarkable, too, that a few of these writings, in speaking of the French Revolution, exhibit an ignorance and forgetfulness, equal to that which we are accustomed to see in French historians, when treating of distant countries or ages. I am not alluding here to points, with respect to which we can conceive an intentional falsification. This proves how completely every one has banished the past from his memory, instead of making it the subject of reflection. It has passed over them like a fearful storm, of which we only retain a general impression, because it is too painful to realise it afresh. Literature is quite extinct here. If we compare the intellectual condition of North Germany with that of other countries, not merely with that of the French at present, we must feel strongly how right Arndt is, in saying that we are a different and a better people. Our literature, too, may be somewhat in danger at the present time. If we do not look about us now, and collect our thoughts before we write much, it may decline among us also. Our peculiar heritage, learning, had been languishing for some time, and has now received a heavy blow. . . . .

CLXXIX.

BRUSSELS, *20th June*, 1814.*

. . . . The public works which Buonaparte has carried out are certainly astonishing; they prove what can be accomplished by the despotism of one restless man who spares no means to effect his end. His principal works in Holland are the impregnable fortifications on the Helder, which were finished in a year and a half; but it must be remembered that not only were the peasantry for many miles round obliged to send their beasts for statute labour, but that the Spanish prisoners also worked at them by thousands. A great part of the stones used in the construction of the causeway to Utrecht, have been taken from houses which were given up by their possessors, because they could no longer pay the land tax, and for which the State could not find purchasers at any price. Amsterdam is externally the least changed of the Dutch cities. The houses on the great canals are kept as beautifully as they were formerly: except in the very remote quarters, you see nothing of the decay and desolation which you would expect after a bankruptcy. The appearance of Haarlem is frightful; it is said that three hundred houses have been destroyed there. The country houses have suffered the most however. The causeway has been carried in a straight line wherever it was possible, and therefore mostly through bare fields; while the old high road wound along the banks of the Vecht among the smiling country seats and park-like gardens. The most beautiful piece of this charming road has, however, been preserved; it is about two miles from Utrecht, where the road runs between two parks, whose great forest trees look almost like a wood, through which you catch glimpses of pretty dwellings. Utrecht, which was still a place of some trade when we were here before, because King Louis held his court there, is now evidently sunk into much deeper poverty; its streets swarm

* The former part of this letter contains an account of Madame Niebuhr's state of health, which seems by this time to have exhibited signs of consumption; and of the beginning of a little excursion which they made into Brabant

with beggars. We staid there a night. The road from thence to Gorcum, close to which little town you cross the Rhine, lies through a very fine alluvial plain; you see many of those little manors which are as numerous in the province of Utrecht as they are rare in that of Holland. But the dwellings of the peasants exhibit few signs of prosperity. I approached Gorcum with curiosity, because our expectations had been strongly excited last January and February by the capture of this place. For a considerable distance, the ruins of peasants' cottages, and the buildings of the suburbs, gave evidence of the siege. But the fortress itself by no means corresponded to the expectations which its importance had raised. Here, too, we had a proof that Buonaparte scarcely ever thought of preserving important works already in existence, but only of creating something new. Nothing can be more ruinous than the walls; a double row of palisades had been erected as a defence against an assault; there were no outworks, nothing that could stand a regular siege. Every thing seems to depend upon the inundations, which, however, are no protection in winter against a bold enemy, and thus the unaccountable surrender is explained. The city has long been one of the poorest in Holland; if the times had been good, it could hardly have recovered from the floods of 1809; and no repairs seem to have been made yet, since the bombardment last winter. Many of the windows are quite boarded up; broken panes are left unmended; we took our dinner in a room that was in this condition. Our companions at the table d'hôte were a merchant from Elberfeldt, and a party of Dutch officers, some of whom had served under the French, and still bragged of their campaigns and their quarters in Germany. This Dutch army is a most melancholy affair, destitute of moral dignity, severed from the nation (so much so that in Amsterdam you never see officers in society, and to enter the service is regarded as the last resort for one who is good for nothing else): without even self-respect; and yet the people never dream that such an army is no protection to them—that they must bestir themselves, and train themselves to the use of arms. . . . .

CLXXXI.

TO PERTHÈS.

AMSTERDAM, *June*, 1814.

. . . . I have perceived here, for months past, how the French poison corrupts a nation; what a miserable figure it cuts when its fetters are removed after years of slavery. In Brabant, I have seen still more vividly, how the union with France has so accustomed the people to a yoke which they hated, that they now long to be under it again—can no longer exist otherwise: and I hear it is the same in the Catholic countries on the Rhine. Truly these times have proved the worth of our Protestantism. I cannot write more to you to-day. God give you his blessing, and preserve your noble powers!

With old and faithful love, your N.

CLXXXII.

BERLIN, *October*, 1814.

If I understand you rightly, I think you are labouring under a misconception as to the Congratulatory Address and its subject.* As no one among the general public could have declared on oath who is its author, so none but He who reads all hearts can tell what the religion of this writer may be, and whether you, or any one else is entitled to envy him his religion or not. At least those Independents of the seventeenth century, wrote just in the same manner about introducing the precepts of men into the worship of God—nay they wrote, spoke, and acted under the influence of the most fanatical hatred; and for my own part I would quite as soon wish for the religion of Milton, or even of Vane, as for

* There were some at this time, who wished to introduce into the German Protestant Church, a liturgy more similar to that of the Church of England. Perthès was in favour of it; Niebuhr thought it unadvisable, if not springing spontaneously from the hearts of the people.

that of Jansenius. If you believe that we should gain anything by adopting the Catholic form of worship, we will not contest the point; though I thought we had agreed, in conversation, that a more efficacious form of worship could never be called into existence, until the Church herself had sprung up afresh from the ashes, and had acquired numbers and consistency by her own internal development. To me and others, this writer appears to aim at the same point. Were he known, I should like to put him to the question, whether he is speaking of a Church founded on faith and conviction, or whether by a Church he only means an ecclesiastical State; but as this is impossible I can say nothing, and must believe the best. . . . .

It is not the Pope, but the imposition of a creed, which the true lover of freedom fears; for no one individual can undertake to hold the same creed unchanged throughout his life, and no two can believe exactly alike, unless they choke themselves with words. And where do we now see the stirrings of aspiration and faith? In Protestant or Catholic Germany? . . . .

CLXXXIII.

TO MADAME HENSLER.

BERLIN, 1*st November*, 1814.

. . . . We arrived here at twelve last night. We called on Nicolovius and the Göschens as early as we could this morning, and I went to Ancillon to learn what was meant by the announcement that I was to give lessons to the Crown Prince. I found that these lessons could only occupy two hours a week, as mathematics, military science, &c., would fill up the remainder of his mornings. I am required to teach finance; but I have reserved to myself the liberty to connect other subjects with that. Savigny is also to give lessons to the Prince for two hours a week;—a general survey of jurisprudence. . . . .

The aspect of Berlin is quite changed since last winter. The great majority of those you see in the streets and squares are men; you meet soldiers in all directions, and it

is quite curious to see the multitude of orders and decorations. All who took part in the war wear medals; and many are now going about with military decorations, whose dress shows that they have returned to the miserable life of a day-labourer.

It seems no longer doubtful, that the unhappy consequences of neglecting the favourable opportunity which presented itself in April, will make themselves felt in our relations with France. It is not known whether Talleyrand has really left; but the communications with him have certainly been broken off. As a warlike spirit is universal in France, I cannot conceive how it is, that while all allow that a new war with France is inevitable sooner or later, scarcely any one sees that it is just as likely to break out now as at any other time. People fancy that the French have laid down their arms, and that is quite a mistake. . . . .

CLXXXIV.

BERLIN, 17*th December*, 1814.

. . . . The mysterious course of public affairs still seems to threaten danger. Nothing more is really known since my last letter. That scarcely anybody feels anxiety, proves nothing at all. It is certain that France is arming, and is raising a large force; and the grounds on which people conclude that the Bourbons would not venture upon a war, are only valid, in case we may assume that they will not allow themselves to be forced into it. The Duke de Berri is quite on the side of the army, and I believe that he leads his father; for in this way, Dupont's dismissal, and Soult's appointment may be accounted for. I do not like our position; still, when one sees in what good spirits our protectors and heroes are, one is ashamed to be gloomy. The army is my constant consolation and delight—all the members of it whom I meet, are ready to open their hearts to me. In other respects, the aspect of Europe is not encouraging. In England, the want of genius becomes daily more visible. I have had an idea of trying to work upon public opinion there, in favour of my beloved Prussia (in nineteen-twentieths

of the people it is with us already); but it is a delicate thing to do, when one is so imperfectly acquainted with the relations of the two cabinets. My vexation on this subject is not my only uneasiness with regard to England. Now and then, indeed, a bright gleam appears; as, for instance, the intended introduction of the trial by jury into Scotland, to the same extent that it exists in England, from which we may hope that in all respects, Scotland will gradually be brought to the enjoyment of the same freedom as England, which she is far from possessing as yet.

I have already, several times, wanted to sit down and tell you, how much pleasure I receive from my lessons to the Crown Prince; but interruptions, or work have prevented my doing so. I rejoice when the day comes to go to him. He is attentive, inquiring, full of interest—all the noble gifts with which nature has so richly endowed him, unfold themselves to me in the course of these lessons. We often wander from our reading into conversation, but not into idle talk, and it is no waste of time. His gaiety of disposition does not render him less earnest; and his feelings are as deep, as his fancy is playful. He seeks instruction and counsel from others, without surrendering himself to the authority of any. I have never seen a youth with a finer nature. He knows, too, how much I am attached to him; that I see in his looks; and the cause of my affection, that it is not his external position which attracts me. It is one of his dearest castles in the air (how it is to be accomplished he does not know), to be the ruler of Greece, in order to wander among the ruins, dream, and excavate. When I hear him it revives my old castles in the air. "If we should be at Athens some day," I said to him, "make me your professor of Greek history, your keeper of the monuments, and director of the excavations!" "No, not keeper; you shall not have that title; I mean to make the excavations myself, but you shall be present."

In my next, I will give you some answer to the problems which Hume has not solved for you. I willingly recognise Hume's great qualities, and his decided superiority to Gibbon;

but, in the earlier times, he overlooks many more things of the kind you have noticed; and in later periods, he does not enter into the mental wants of the men whom he accounts fools and rebels. But this is equally the case with Gibbon.

CLXXXV.

BERLIN, *30th December*, 1814.

. . . . Our anxiety as to the state of feeling in the countries between the Rhine and the Maas, seems to be groundless. The manufacturers there have found a compensation for the loss of the French market—the source of their prosperity since the re-union—more quickly than could have been expected; the free trade by sea opens Italy to them, and they have more orders than they can execute. They are not likely, therefore, to want for worldly prosperity; but these districts, parts of which are moreover pure Walloon, need a spiritual regeneration. God grant that if these become ours, we may do as much for the souls of their inhabitants, as King Frederick did for the material welfare of Silesia! In Saxony, too, we should undoubtedly make very rapid progress in winning the hearts of the people, if we came forward to them with thorough cordiality. Oh how I should like to receive some commission, by which I might leave a good work of this kind, and a memory behind me! . . . . . All Italy is in a ferment, and Murat, no doubt, is on the watch for an outbreak. He would be a sad deliverer! But, in one way or other, that country will certainly be formed into a single realm, in the course of one or a few generations. The dreams of early youth are strange. Something of this kind took supreme possession of my mind in the visions of my early life, and the separation of Sicily, as the first spot where a free constitution could take root, came before me in those dreams. When once the Congress is over, we shall again be able to read the future. Up to this time many things are still left undecided. But I firmly believe that Italy will yet fetch her works of art back from Paris, and that France will one day be dismembered. . . . .

CLXXXVI.

BERLIN, *14th January*, 1815.

My pamphlet* comes out to-day, and I am sending a packet of copies off to you. Now that this little work is finished I hope it will please you. I must observe, that it was composed as for an oration before an assembly, and flowed straight from my heart, and hence it must be read like a speech. Any one who should read it to himself, or aloud, without modulating his voice, in a uniform tone, like a treatise that is merely concerned with ideas, would probably be as much puzzled with it, as the ordinary reader is with Greek orations, (I do not mean to institute a comparison here,) particularly those in Thucydides, before he has learnt to read with the ear. Do not misunderstand me. I am well aware, that I by no means belong to the great masters of oratory in writing; but I also know, what most of our authors do not in the least know and consider, that the old prose writers wrote as if they were speaking to an audience; while among us, prose is invariably written for the eye alone, at least only for the ear in the case of an easy narrative. This is why my style is found so strange and unusual, and hence punctuation is so difficult to me, for I ought to have many more signs in order to indicate my exact intention. In fact, with all that the writer composes as if he were speaking, the character of the movement, and the time, ought to be marked, as in music, for the ordinary reader. Among the many good hopes which I cherish for the future, one is, that we may some day attain a good prose, in which that which I at least feel, may be perfectly expressed. If I had found some guidance, and had not wearied myself with some things while neglecting others, I might have reached it myself. As it is, that is out of the question. I break off to take a copy of my tract to old Blucher.

. . . . Not to leave your historical questions quite

* "Preussen's Recht gegen den sächsischen Hof." The Right of Prussia against the Court of Saxony.

unanswered a second time, I reply to your first, that in the middle ages, England stood in the same relation to the manufacturing districts of the Netherlands,—where agriculture did not begin to flourish till after the decline of their textile productions in the fifteenth century,—which the countries on the Baltic now occupy towards England. It fed their great cities with its corn: and then, too, the export of raw wool was an extremely profitable trade. The country also possessed ships and fisheries. At the same time, the nation was very frugal, and all, with the exception of persons connected with the court, clothed themselves in home-made stuffs; and hence it is no wonder that so much gold was coined there at such an early period.

I do not myself feel quite clear about the position of Lorenzo de Medici. I know the offices he filled, but that does not suffice to account for his power. He is no favourite of mine.

I shall soon set about the continuation of my great work, and have made all sorts of discoveries. Farewell!

CLXXXVII.

BERLIN, 18*th February*, 1815.

I am very gloomy, and you will easily enter into my feelings. Ever since Monday, it has been known that the Congress at Vienna had come to an agreement respecting the partition of territory, and the day before yesterday, their decisions were published here, so far as they relate to Prussia. My feeling is one of mingled sorrow and indignation at our enemies. I strongly fear that we shall give up East Friesland, and other territory besides, to Hanover; so that that state, which has not made the slightest effort against France, will be enlarged by one-half. We are robbed of old subjects, and shall be left in a worse position than we were in 1805.

To England herself, this extension of Hanover, and her permanent implication in the affairs of the continent through Belgium, is most disadvantageous. I waver between the impulse to give vent to my dissatisfaction, and

the voice within that tells me to cease dwelling upon painful subjects, and to return with all my thoughts to my studies; especially as my health is suffering from the constant renewal of mortification, while I cannot really accomplish anything, in the sphere of actions and decisions, by speaking or writing. France has managed everything very cleverly for herself. How soon will she succeed in regaining the left bank of the Rhine? If we had defied her, the cowards would soon have given way, and even if it had come to a war, it would indeed have been a struggle for life or death, but we should have conquered in the end. . . . .

CLXXXVIII.

BERLIN, *March*, 1815.

. . . . You, too, will find that although the number of my acquaintance has much increased, there is far less of youthful life, activity and variety in our social intercourse, than there was five years ago. We live in a much more retired way, on account of the rise of prices, and the disbursements which we regard as a matter of duty, and see much less company at home; and then, too, everybody is grown older. This winter has everywhere destroyed cheerfulness, just as the war had already suspended people's interest in their own business. When times were at the worst, men turned once for all from the fruitless contemplation of the public misery, and thought of themselves and their own affairs; during the struggle, these were forgotten, and their whole souls were occupied with the public fate,—and with hope. The general excitement now existing must be calmed down, before people can be quite themselves again.

Milly will have told you of her resolution to try magnetism. She is better since its use, and free from cough in the evenings, when she used to be particularly troubled with it; she sleeps better, &c. God grant that this may be a *real* progress: it had need be so, for she is terribly reduced. She has not had the least touch of magnetic sleep as yet. . .

The return of Napoleon has drawn forth the most vehement expressions of delight from many here; this may

surprise you, but you will be able to understand it on reflection. The King of Saxony and Maria Louisa knew of his departure from Elba, two days earlier than the allied sovereigns.

CLXXXIX.

BERLIN, 1*st April.*

You want above all things full particulars of Milly's state. In the first place I beg you, in Milly's name as well as my own, to lay aside all your fears as to the irritating effect of magnetism; on the contrary, she is, in fact, in a much less irritable state now, than before she began to try it. Besides you must not confound the effects of Puisegur's magnetism with the wand, with those of a soothing manipulation. She almost always feels decidedly better than usual after the manipulation, and, imperfectly as I can practise it, she feels quite soothed after I have magnetised her, as well as I can, before going to bed, inclined to sleep, and as soon as she lies down she falls into a quiet, unbroken slumber; whereas before she often laid awake till morning.*

If we had believed that Buonaparte would be received so completely without opposition, most undoubtedly, no one here would have rejoiced at his landing. What the right-minded among us hoped for, was, that we should seize this opportunity to save East Friesland, the loss of which I, even more than most others, feel to be a terrible grievance. But even this seems to have been left undone, and therefore his return is an unmitigated calamity, and no one can see what the end will be. I look forward to this new war with a heavy heart. However we must keep up our spirits as well as we can. Our youth and our rural population go to meet the enemy with great alacrity. Some of the principal towns, where people have speculated largely in paper-money, are in a dreadfully depressed state. In a few weeks, hostilities will be in full operation; in all probability a second advance on Paris will be attempted; I doubt whether the attempt will

* Here follows a further description of her symptoms in detail, which were such as must be anything but consoling to an unprejudiced person.

not be made rashly and prematurely; meanwhile, whatever betide, to lose heart would be the very worst thing we could do. It is, indeed, lamentable that a still larger portion of our youth should be cut off, and the rest most likely be left to a great extent uneducated; it seems inevitable that a great decline of science should take place in consequence; and moreover, it is not favourable to the hope of civil freedom, that the whole nation should be converted into practised warriors. But we must take every period as it is, and seek to make of it what its peculiar characteristics allow.

The Crown Prince has lately given me a keepsake; it is a cut glass, which belonged to Frederick William I., whom I have held up to his respect, but whose harshness revolts him.

Our young friend Chr. Stolberg will, of course, return to his regiment. He is a thoroughly good youth.

CXC.

BERLIN, *2nd May*, 1815.

So far Milly had written last Saturday. Since then, Frederica's letter, with its sad news, has reached us. How unexpected it was, you can hardly imagine; for I scarcely doubted that the quiet life of my dear old father might be prolonged for years to come, so that we might look forward to seeing him again next year, if Milly's health permitted the journey. I cannot help reproaching myself for this want of all foreboding of his death; for I think that if I had thought of him as often as I ought, some presentiment of his approaching release must have visited me; and on the very day of his death, I do not remember to have once thought of him. Oh that I had been with him in these last days! What would I give that it had been possible! If he had been less unexacting in all the relationships of life, less thoroughly unselfish, less easily satisfied, he would often have felt hurt that, partly owing to my faults and impatience, partly to his misunderstanding me in early life, I gave

him so few active proofs of love and tenderness. That this was not a source of pain to him, that his son was a joy to him notwithstanding, does not excuse me. When the time is gone by, in which it is possible to atone for acts of neglect, they begin to press heavily on the heart. And I owed it to my noble-minded father, to return and to reward his honest love, though in many cases it mistook the way to its end. If omissions of this kind can in any way be atoned for on the other side of the grave, it shall at least be my endeavour to atone for them there.

My sister has not yet written, and Frederica gives us so few particulars, that we hardly know anything about his last days. From his bodily state I fear—and should be so glad to think otherwise—that his death must have been attended with great pain. His soul was no doubt at peace, and departed without reluctance or fear.

It is a great comfort to me that we are much alone, and have few interruptions at present. To me, my father's death is like cutting off a part of my existence, little as it can influence the facts of my life at my age, and so separated as we were from each other.

Oh that Milly's health were more encouraging! I would so gladly say anything to cheer you about her, but I dare not tell you what is not true. I *cannot* perceive that she is improving. She varies very much, and there are days when she feels easy and well. We make no further progress with magnetism. I wish so earnestly that she would take Heim's medicines, but she will not hear of it. That all her present illness is the result of that unhappy expedition up the Wertha Hills, becomes clearer and clearer to me. May God help us. I trust it will be practicable for you to come to us.

How can I conclude this letter without thanking you once more, and praying for a blessing on you, for all the love that you have shown to my father; for all the comfort and pleasure your society afforded him after his fall, and for the love and tenderness that he received from you during our

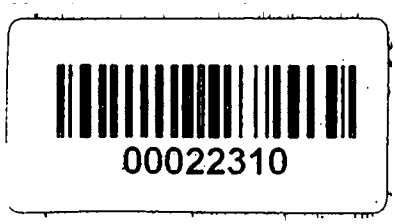
visit. It would make you still dearer to me if anything could do so.

May Heaven reward Gloyer, too, for all that he has done for one who was a stranger to him!

Farewell! Gretchen has most likely already gone back to her friend; if not, give our best love to her.

END OF VOL. I.

BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.


00022310

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 28 March, 2016